

# THE CONCORD SAUNTERER



*To we saunter toward the Holyland;  
Till one day the sun shall shine more  
brightly than ever he has done, shall  
perchance shine into our minds and  
hearts, and light up our whole lives  
with a great awakening light, so warm  
and serene and golden as on a  
bank-side in Autumn.*

# THE CONCORD SAUNTERER

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The front-cover drawing of Thoreau's Walden Pond cabin accompanied the first printing of *Walden* in 1854. This drawing was based on an original executed by Henry's sister Sophia. The passage about sauntering is from Thoreau's "Walking" manuscript, courtesy of the Concord Free Public Library. The likeness of Thoreau on the back cover is from an 1856 Benjamin D. Maxham daguerreotype, owned by the Thoreau Society.

THE CONCORD SAUNTERER, an annual publication of The Thoreau Society, seeks biographical, historical, textual, bibliographical, and interpretive articles relating to Henry Thoreau and his associates, Concord, and Transcendentalism. Submissions of all lengths are invited; shorter pieces not used will also be considered for the quarterly THOREAU SOCIETY BULLETIN. Contributions should conform to *The Chicago Manual of Style* for endnote documentation. Send two copies plus SASE to the Editor, THE CONCORD SAUNTERER, Department of English and Modern Languages, Wartburg College, Waverly, IA 50677; e-mail [schneider@wartburg.edu](mailto:schneider@wartburg.edu); phone (319) 352-8435. Decisions are reported within three months. Subscription to THE CONCORD SAUNTERER is by membership in the Society; see the back cover for additional information. THE CONCORD SAUNTERER is referenced in *American Literary Scholarship*, *American Humanities Index*, and the *MLA Bibliography*.

# THE CONCORD SAUNTERER

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**Volume 9**

**2001**

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## *Editor's Pages*

A month after the September 11, 2001, attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, Wendell Berry, a twenty-first century kindred spirit of Thoreau, wrote the following words in the web magazine version of the environmental magazine *Orion* ([www.oriononline.org](http://www.oriononline.org)):

The time will come when we will not be able to remember the horrors of September 11 without remembering also the unquestioning technological and economic optimism that ended on that day. This optimism rested on the proposition that we were living in a "new world order" and a "new economy" that would "grow" on and on, bringing a prosperity of which every new increment would be "unprecedented."

This was an optimism, Berry continues, which "accepted universal pollution and global warming as normal costs of doing business."

Although Thoreau could not have envisioned the "new world order" to which Berry refers, nearly one hundred fifty years earlier his voice was already warning us about the dangers of "unquestioning technological and economic optimism" based on unlimited growth. Indeed, recent events remind us repeatedly of the pertinence of Thoreau's voice to our twenty-first century lives. His concerns about a world based on material wealth rather than spiritual values, his advocacy of passive resistance as an effective method of social reform, and his recognition of the link between industry's degradation of the environment and a diminishing quality of life all ring true as responses to crucial issues today. One Thoreau Society member responded to the September 11 events and to Susie Carlisle's editorial comments on them in *The Thoreau Society Bulletin* with the following poem about Thoreau:

### *Preservation*

There was a moment.  
Ktaadn, perhaps. He looked west.  
The last of the wagon trains  
reaching the coast looked back  
in sated satisfaction.  
From the east, the stench  
of Carrion Empire wafted across  
the ocean, news of slow death  
in the emaciated European soil.

Emerson creating new myth  
 on the plains below,  
 Whitman singing Brooklyn eternal  
 for a moment.  
 Iron horses converging,  
 throwing scarlet dust shadows  
 rising on the red frontier:  
 Birth of a nation.

This was the last survey,  
 he must have known.  
 Born in this moment,  
 preserved in that wildness.

This issue of *The Concord Saunterer* contains several essays that demonstrate the ongoing pertinence of Thoreau and his circle to twenty-first century concerns. Daniel Botkin, in his essay first presented as the keynote address to the Thoreau Society annual gathering in 2000, discusses Thoreau's method of studying nature as an appropriate ecological problem-solving strategy for the new century. Robert Hubbard raises the questions of why the most well-known play about Thoreau, Lawrence and Lee's *The Night Thoreau Spent in Jail*, has been seldom produced in recent years and whether the play's Romantic depiction of Thoreau as nature lover and social reformer is still pertinent today. David Lyttle's essay on Emerson's struggle with the concept of evil will resonate with readers who hear President Bush refer repeatedly to terrorists as the "Evil-Doers" and to America's response to the World Trade Center and Pentagon attacks as a war against evil. (See also Lyttle's previous essay on Emerson, "'The World is a Divine Dream': Emerson's Subjective Idealism," in the 1997 issue of *The Concord Saunterer*, pages 93-112.) Chris Nesmith's essay on Thoreau's response to the anti-abolitionist journalist John Mitchel reminds us of Thoreau's concern about the general public's inadvertent complicity in social evil, his recognition that, as a modern cartoon would express it, "we have met the enemy and he is us."

Other essays in this issue provide valuable contexts for our understanding of Thoreau and his circle. Leslie Perrin Wilson provides us with the first publication of a document that reveals much about the details of life in nineteenth-century Concord. Her careful editing of Bessie Keyes Hudson's memoir of one of the more retiring but nonetheless influential citizens of Thoreau's Concord, Caroline Hoar, provides a fascinating peek into the parlors and meetingplaces of Concord and reveals the quiet but powerful influence that women could wield in that world.

The reader would be wise to read not only the memoir itself but also Wilson's endnotes, which often lead to fascinating sidelights in the history of Concord. Bernard Drew has done an intriguing bit of geographical detective work in making his case for the identity of the mountain "tarn" which Thoreau describes in *Walden* and in thereby suggesting how Thoreau's travels influenced his writing in his most famous book.

Finally, Gary Scharnhorst and Thomas Potter remind us of Thoreau's influence on two significant later writers, Kate Field and Edwin Way Teale. Field, a late nineteenth-century feminist and journalist, was much impressed by Thoreau's writings, which inspired her interest in the preservation of nature. Teale, a twentieth-century nature writer, was even more thoroughly influenced by Thoreau and incorporated some of Thoreau's travels and the building of a woodland retreat into his own life. The interested reader might wish to pursue Teale's writings further through the bibliography which Potter provides at the end of his essay.

With this issue *The Concord Saunterer*, while not endorsing any undue technological optimism, enters cyberspace with a web site on the internet which can be reached by going to [www.walden.org](http://www.walden.org) and clicking on *The Concord Saunterer* link. Current and prospective readers can find there the table of contents from recent issues. Thanks to Tom Harris for providing this new service for Thoreau Society members. Would Thoreau have approved? One can only guess.

*RJS*



**Thoreau's Survey Map Of Walden Pond**  
*Courtesy Concord Free Public Library*

# *The Depth of Walden Pond: Thoreau As a Guide to Solving Twenty-First Century Environmental Problems*

**Daniel B. Botkin**

I am honored to talk to the Thoreau Society, and I do so with considerable humility because I know many of you have great expertise about Thoreau's writing and life. I have been long fascinated by his works, reading them first about 1970. But over the years I have become more and more interested in nineteenth-century thinkers and how they might be beneficial to us.

I have worked thirty-five years in ecology, which is the study of the relationship between living things and their environment. It is the science that tries to understand biological nature that so fascinated Thoreau. During these thirty-five years, I have also tried my best to help solve environmental problems. Along the way I have run into many strange stumbling blocks. The writings and thoughts of Thoreau have been useful to me in these tasks. I believe they are vital to us today. So, for me, his writings are not something merely of historical interest, they are of immediate use.

During the time that I have been working on my new book, *No Man's Garden: Thoreau and a New Vision for Civilization and Nature*, I have integrated more and more of Thoreau's ideas into my speeches. Considering how famous Thoreau is, and how he is typically perceived as one of the fathers of modern environmentalism, I have been surprised by how few people have read his works. I have made a practice to ask an audience: "How many of you have read something by Thoreau that wasn't assigned either in high school or college?" And I'd say that out of a hundred people in an audience, only four to six people raise their hands. With a few exceptions, there are only two things that they've read: *Walden* and "Civil Disobedience."

Both pro- and anti-environmentalists, however, quote Thoreau. Ironically, both primarily quote the same statement, his famous line "in wildness is the preservation of the world." And then they go on to give an explanation to suit their purposes, which is generally a misinterpretation of what Thoreau meant.

Whatever the explanation, it is typically simplistic. But as the members of the Thoreau Society know, one of the fascinating things about Thoreau is the breadth and complexity of his thoughts, and how much he struggled throughout his life with ideas. His writings are not only fascinating, they allow many interpretations.

### Thoreau and Modern Environmentalism

It is generally said that the modern environmental movement started in the 1960s with Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*, and most people seem to believe that a concern about nature and the relationships between people and nature is a recent phenomenon. But the questions that today's environmentalists ask are the same, ancient questions people have always asked. As long as people have written they have asked three questions about people and nature. The first is: "What is the character of nature undisturbed by human beings?" which in modern parlance becomes "what's wilderness, and what's natural in our terms?" The second is: "What is the effect of human beings on nature?" Its modern equivalent is: "Are we messing up nature or are we helping it?" The third is, "What is the effect of nature on people?" This question we phrase pretty much the same way. The last question is deep in Thoreau's writing,

For a while, when modern environmentalism first got started, it had to announce itself, so its proponents were argumentative. Then environmentalism became main-stream, and for a while – in the late seventies and early eighties – our society appeared to be moving to a resolution between pro- and anti-environmentalists. Public opinion polls have shown over the last twenty years that approximately four-fifths of Americans consider themselves environmentalists.

But in the 1990s, an increasing divisiveness reasserted itself and continues to underlie environmental debates. On one side extreme environmentalists argue that modern civilization will destroy the Earth's life support system, causing an end to life and therefore to human beings, and therefore modern civilization must be abandoned. On the other side, anti-environmentalists argue that environmentalists are going to destroy civilization, and we must protect civilization from them.

In contrast, public opinion polls suggest that the public concerned about the fate of the environment is also concerned about the fate of people. Most of us want to maintain both human beings and nature, both civilization and nature. This point of view is consistent with Thoreau's. So the masses, not the special interest groups, agree more with Thoreau.

What is the way out of the dilemma between the political and ideological conflicts over environment and the desires of the people to have both humanity and its civilization and to maintain nature? I believe that the writings of Henry David Thoreau have useful answers.

## Ironies of the Information Age

During the more than three decades that I have been an ecological scientist and involved with environmental issues, I have found several ironies of our modern technological and scientific information age. The first irony is that often we do not measure what we need to know. I have been involved in a lot of major environmental issues, from the conservation of bowhead and sperm whales to the possible effects of global warming on forests. In each case I find that there are key pieces of information missing that nobody has bothered to find out.

The second irony of the information age thing is that, if we do measure something useful, we usually don't bother to use it. This is true among scientists as well as among public agencies and non-profit interest groups. We just archive information and forget it.

The third irony is that, although we have the ability to gather many kinds of scientific information, we tend to solve environmental problems from ancient myths, plausibilities, false inferences, and ideologies. This means we often start with an answer that we wish were true and squeeze whatever scientific information we use into a mold that conforms to this wish. And we get very upset if people do not believe us.

## Thoreau as a Seeker of Quantitative Information

Here Thoreau is a wonderful example to us. Thoreau buffs are familiar with his search for quantitative measurements, his careful analysis of information, and how his imagination was stimulated by what he learned. His experience that strikes me the strongest is his measurement of the depth of Walden Pond.

"There have been many stories about the bottom, or rather no bottom, of this pond, which certainly had no foundation for themselves," Thoreau punned in Walden. "It is remarkable how long men will believe in the bottomlessness of a pond without taking the trouble to sound it."<sup>1</sup> He went on to write that "Many have believed that Walden reached quite through to the other side of the globe" (285). And so he became interested in the depth of the pond and set out to learn this physical, quantitative characteristic of one of his favorite places in nature.

As a person with an intrinsic naturalist's and observer's inclination, Thoreau took a simple and direct approach to determining the depth of the pond: he measured it. He had the skill to do this, because he often worked as a surveyor. "As I was desirous to recover the long lost bottom of Walden Pond," he wrote, "I surveyed it carefully, before the ice broke up early in '46 with compass and chain and sounding line. I fathomed it easily with a cod-line and a stone weighing about a pound and a half, and could tell accurately when the stone left the bottom, by having to pull so much harder before the water got underneath to help me" (285-287). Thoreau made an important step from informal natural history to quantitative measurement. This is a key step in using science to obtain a new kind of understanding of nature.

Once he had made one measurement, his curiosity was aroused and he began to investigate the general shape of the pond's basin. He made more than one hundred measurements of the pond's depth. From these he made a map, using his skills as a surveyor, and located the deepest point in the pond: "The greatest depth was exactly one hundred and two feet; to which may be added the five feet which it has risen since [with the spring runoff into the pond], making one hundred and seven" (287).

His curiosity further aroused, Thoreau began to consider generalizations arising from his quantitative measurements. "As I sounded through the ice I could determine the shape of the bottom with greater accuracy than is possible in surveying harbors which do not freeze over," he wrote (288).

Measurements led to surprises. "I was surprised at its general regularity," he wrote. "In the deepest part there are several acres more level than almost any field which is exposed to the sun, wind and plough. In one instance, on a line arbitrarily chosen, the depth did not vary more than one foot in thirty rods; and generally, near the middle, I could calculate the variation for each one hundred feet in any direction beforehand within three or four inches. Some are accustomed to speak of deep and dangerous holes even in quiet sandy ponds like this, but the effect of water under these circumstances is to level all inequalities" (288-289).

Thoreau's investigation then went through a progression to ever more general theoretical constructs, leading to the development of a set of hypotheses about ponds and lakes in general. To do this, he had to find a means to aggregate his data so that Thoreau could see the result as a whole and think about that whole. For him, with his experience as a surveyor, this was the straightforward step of making a map. This required that his depth soundings be located geographically.

From the map he "observed a remarkable coincidence," he wrote, "the line of greatest length intersected the line of greatest breadth exactly at the point of greatest depth" (289). Now Thoreau had expanded his inquiry beyond the initial question of the depth of the pond. Having done a series of measurements, he began to see the pond differently, as if its bottom were a field, and he became curious about the shape of that field. Measurements had touched his imagination.

In reflecting on possible generalizations about his observations, Thoreau considered a comment made by somebody whose opinion he respected. "A factory owner hearing what depth I had found," he wrote, "thought that it could not be true, for, judging from his acquaintance with dams, sand would not lie at so steep an angle" (287). In this process Thoreau was not the mythical hermit avoiding human contact, but a person who considered the judgment of others when their experience and knowledge might seem valuable.

At this point he was beginning to move into an interesting thought process. A simple curiosity had led to a simple measurement, then to a series of those measurements, which had then led him to a consideration of whether the measurements could be correct and, if so, what they implied. Here, it implied that ponds could not simply always be shaped along the edges like dams of

sand. “But the deepest ponds are not so deep in proportion to their area as most suppose,” Thoreau continued, “and, if drained, would not leave very remarkable valleys. They are not like cups between the hills; for this one, which is so unusually deep for its area, appears in a vertical section through its centre not deeper than a shallow plate. Most ponds, emptied, would leave a meadow no more hollow than we frequently see” (287)

Based on his series of quantitative measurements, Thoreau began to speculate about the shape of ponds in general. He began to develop a hypothesis: perhaps the greatest depth of all ponds would tend to occur at the intersection of the line of greatest width and the line of greatest length. To test this idea, quantitative measurements were necessary. His scientific measurements piqued new curiosity, led to new kinds of questions, while leading to a new understanding. The new understanding brought him, in a different way than before, closer to nature.

Thoreau’s study of the pond brings out another important distinction, that between observations and inferences, which are ideas that are developed based on a set of observations. A casual observation that Walden Pond looks deep is one thing, an inference from a single glance that it must be deep everywhere is another — it is a false inference. Confusing observations with inferences and accepting untested inferences is the kind of sloppy thinking often described by the phrase “thinking makes it so,” and is something that continues to pose problems for dealing with nature and the environment.<sup>2</sup>

### **Applying Thoreau’s Approach To Modern Environmental Issues**

One would hope that this sound, fundamental scientific approach would be followed today. After all, it’s been well known and well applied for several centuries. And one would hope it was applied to modern issues about nature — the very object to which Thoreau himself applied the method.

But sad to say, I have found over and over again that today’s environmental issues often receive as much scientific analysis as the people who chose to sit by Walden Pond and guess at its depth. Perhaps the situation that stands out most for me has been my work trying to help conserve salmon.

I have been involved with issues concerning salmon in the Pacific northwest during the last ten years. This began in the early 1990s when I was asked to direct a major, million-dollar project for the state of Oregon to find out what were the relative effects of forestry practices on salmon. Forestry is one of the four most discussed salmon culprits — always blamed for the supposed demise of salmon. Forestry is blamed because when forests are cut down near streams, spawning and rearing grounds for salmon are damaged or destroyed.

The other culprits commonly blamed for salmon declines are fishermen for overfishing, marine mammals — especially sea lions and harbor seals — for eating too many salmon, and dams and other waterway engineering for destroying the migration routes of salmon.

The study I directed was funded by a special bill through the Oregon legislature, so one would expect that the legislature, or at least the staffers, would believe that the information existed on which the study could be based. We assumed this to be true also. We established an office in Portland, Oregon. When we got up there we began to seek basic information. There were twenty-three rivers we were asked to examine – all the rivers in Oregon south of – and excluding – the Columbia River. We asked ourselves: What do we need to know?

First of all, we needed to know the numbers of adult salmon that have returned to these twenty-three rivers, year after year, so we could establish whether there had been a decline, whether there were clear trends over time, and what kind of variation occurred from year to year. We needed quantitative information just like the information Thoreau sought about the depth of Walden Pond.

From counts of adult salmon swimming upstream, we could determine what had happened to them. This seemed necessary information in order to establish a link to forest practices and the condition of salmon within the watershed of each river. And so we tried to get data for counts of the salmon on these rivers. We worked with the Oregon Department of Fish and Game and soon discovered that they had reports for only some of the rivers, about seven, and they were unable to locate copies of all their reports. They lacked an adequate archival system even for their own publications.

We examined the reports that they could find. Each had tables listing the number of adult salmon for each species returning each year. But we noticed that either in the caption for the table or in the text there would always be a statement that the numbers were “estimated.” We did not know what kind of estimation procedures were used and began to ask. Each time we called we got an incomplete, fuzzy answer. Finally, I called the person in charge of the salmon management for the state of Oregon and said, “Just tell us where you count the salmon; we’ll go down and talk to the guys who do the counting and we’ll find out what they mean by ‘estimated.’” He said “Oh, count the salmon. We only count the salmon on two rivers out of the twenty three.” So, as Thoreau would have realized, one kind of primary, quantitative information necessary for our analysis was available for less than ten percent of the rivers.

Another piece of information we needed was a map of the current forest conditions, so we asked the state of Oregon for such a map. But they said they did not have one. We persuaded them to fund the creation of a map from satellite imagery.

Then we asked if they had historic information about the past condition of forests, so we could compare past salmon abundances with past forest conditions. At first they said that no information of that kind existed. But after several years of the project, we learned that about 1915 the Oregon state forester spent a third of the forestry budget to make a map of the forest conditions. Once he produced this map and left the position as state forester, nobody cared about the map. It ended up stored in a men’s room and was eventually thrown out. However, that night a watchman noticed the map in a dumpster, and he rescued

it. It was the only historic map done by the state of Oregon, and the fact that it still existed was because a night watchman, not a scientist or agency administrator, thought it might be important.

Next we asked about detailed information about the history of logging within the watershed of each river. If you want to know what are the effects of logging, you have to know about a river, what happened to the fish in it, when it was logged, how it was logged, and how much of it was logged. But we were told that in Oregon logging permits were given out by a county, and that these permits contained no information about where within the county, how much land, or by what method, the forests were cut. And the county throws out permit information after five years.

We decided to make a table containing basic information about each river, including the river's name, its length, the area of its watershed. We assumed this information would be easy to find. My research assistant called the Oregon Department of Fish and Game and was told that that agency did not have this information, and we should call the Oregon Department of Water. We did that, and we were told that that agency also did not have the information. The state of Oregon did not know the length of its rivers.

Without going into any further details, it should be clear that little of the necessary quantitative information was available. Then we ran into the second irony of the information age: even the information that exists is rarely used. None of the professionals involved with salmon, to our knowledge, had bothered to use the information about the counts of salmon on the Rogue and the Umpqua, the two rivers where the adult salmon were counted.

### **Thoreau, Experts, and Expertise**

But then we found a remarkable exception. During our project we held ten public meetings. At one, Jim Welter, a retired fisherman in his eighties, spoke. He said "I don't know much about science, but it just makes sense that if these fish are spawned and reared in fresh waters and then go to sea for three years or so, that the number of adult salmon returning ought to be affected by the amount of water flowing three years earlier, when they were born." Jim, like Thoreau, went beyond an informal (what philosophers call a qualitative) statement. He went to the quantitative data. He obtained the counts of the salmon for the Rogue and Umpqua Rivers from the state of Oregon's Department of Fish and Game. Then he went to the U. S. Geological Survey and obtained records of water flow for those rivers. With help from a friend, he graphed these data. Once again he was taking the same steps that Thoreau did with Walden Pond.

Jim showed the graphs at the public meeting. They were impressive. A series of high water flow years were followed three years later by high numbers of returning adult salmon, while low water flow years were followed three years later by small numbers of returning adults.

There is another connection here to Thoreau. Those of you who are well read in his writings know that he respected foresters, fishermen, Indian

guides – people who had direct experience and contact with nature, and he sought out their ideas. “Fishermen, hunters, woodchoppers, and others, spending their lives in the fields and woods, in a peculiar sense a part of Nature themselves, are often in a more favorable mood for observing her than philosophers or poets, who approach her with expectation,” he wrote (*Walden* 210).

Jim Welter did not look like a typical TV news anchorman or TV expert. He was thin, wiry, wore a patch over one eye. But he knew what he was talking about and he thought clearly. He was somewhat like the Wellfleet Oysterman that so impressed Thoreau with his local knowledge of Cape Cod when Thoreau traveled there.

Wherever possible, Thoreau tried to learn directly for himself. In general, he did not accept at face value what other people said. Perhaps the greatest example of this is his experience with his mentor, Emerson. As part of Transcendentalism, Emerson believed that nature was benign and cared about human beings. Thoreau listened to the great man and then went to the Maine woods where he climbed Mount Katahdin to see if this were true for nature at her rawest. He found that it was not true, at least not for himself.

When a subject came up that he could not answer in such a direct manner by himself, Thoreau sought experts, and he used expertise in a specific way. Once again, his approach is useful to us. Our society is confused about experts, especially scientific experts – about who is a scientific expert and about the role of scientists and science within our society. When Thoreau could not answer a question directly, he sought people who had had direct experience with the subject that concerned him. In his travels through the Maine woods, he was impressed by Joe Polis, his last guide there, and sought to understand how Polis could find his way so well in the forests.

But even with experts, Thoreau was cautious. He used the assertions of experts as hypotheses to be tested, as the beginning of exploration, not the end. This happened when he visited Cape Cod. There he learned that the Cape itself – its soils, its shape – was continually changing under the force of winds and water. He learned that first from the Wellfleet Oysterman and from other long-term residents of the Cape. One “told us that a log canoe known to have been buried many years before on the Bay side at East Harbor in Truro, where the Cape is extremely narrow, appeared at length on the Atlantic side, the Cape having rolled over it, and an old woman said – ‘Now, you see, it is true what I told you, that the Cape is moving.’”<sup>3</sup>

Then he sought out the keeper of Highland Lighthouse, who he learned had lived there for many decades. The Highland Light was a landmark then as it is today, a classic white pillar rising above a white building on the edge of a picturesque dune, high above the beach and the water, facing to the east, to the open Atlantic ocean. It sits on the edge of an undulating landscape of dune grass, shrubs, small oaks and pitch pines, a mixture of patches of grasslands, shrub lands, and salt-spray-stunted, open woodlands. It is a lonely but picturesque landscape. The lighthouse stands on the edge of huge dunes that afford a grand view of the shore below. From the lighthouse, the dune falls away steeply for a

long distance. Far below, at the base of the dune on which the lighthouse sits, people strolling along the strand appear as tiny toy figures.

The Lighthouse was built in 1798 to provide one of the major lights to guide ships away from dangerous shoals along the coast of the Cape, and it performed that function during Thoreau's time. Today, the lighthouse is automated and no longer has a keeper.

The Lighthouse Keeper that Thoreau met agreed about the movement of the Cape. "According to the light-house keeper, the Cape is wasting here on both sides, though most on the eastern," Thoreau wrote (118). Thoreau listened, was intrigued by this hypothesis, and then constructed some surveying equipment from materials he borrowed from a carpenter, and made his own measurements. "I borrowed the plane and square, level and dividers, of a carpenter who was shingling a barn near by," Thoreau wrote, "and using one of those shingles made of a mast, contrived a rude sort of quadrant, with pins for sights and pivots, and got the angle of elevation of the Bank opposite the light-house, and with a couple of cod-lines the length of its slope, and so measured its height on the shingle" He observed that the dune rose 110 feet "above its immediate base" and 123 feet above mean low tide.

Next, he checked his measurements against those of other land surveyors. "Graham, who has carefully surveyed the extremity of the Cape, makes it one hundred and thirty feet," he wrote (118).

Then he looked for signs of erosion — making qualitative observations. He found evidence of erosion about a half mile south of the lighthouse, at the point of highest land in the vicinity. There along the dune he saw streams "trickling down it at intervals of two or three rods" which left erosional shapes like "steep Gothic roofs fifty feet high or more," which were at one location "curiously eaten out in the form of a large semicircular crater" (118).

Still not content with the opinion of the lighthouse keeper nor the measurements he was able to take himself, he examined data kept by the lighthouse keeper. "We calculated, *from his data*, how soon the Cape would be quite worn away," Thoreau wrote (118-119, emphasis Thoreau's).

Thoreau made additional measurements when he returned to the Cape the following summer. "Between this October and June of the next year I found that the bank had lost about forty feet in one place, opposite the light-house," he wrote (119). From these observations he concluded that the Cape was wearing away about six feet a year. But he was cautious about simple extrapolation and generalization from a few observations. "Any conclusion drawn from the observations of a few years or one generation only are likely to prove false," he wrote, "and the Cape may balk expectation by its durability." This skepticism — even about one's own measurements and observations — is one of the important features of science and of scientists.

The steps are clear: first, learn for yourself if at all possible; second, if not, select your experts carefully — make sure they have had direct experience; third, listen to what they say and treat that as a hypothesis; fourth, test the hypothesis for yourself.

This is the path to knowledge we followed with Jim Welter. We viewed his graphs of salmon and water flow, and then made extensive statistical analyses to see if what looked to be the case held up under analysis. It did.

This way of selecting experts and using their knowledge was useful in our situation and can be useful today. It is not the role of scientists, as experts, to make policy, but to advise us about what is possible based on their knowledge and about how we can achieve the choices of the possible, what we gain and what we give up. Then in a democratic society it is up to us to decide which of the possible choices we wish to pursue.

Encompassing all these specific ways that Thoreau's life and writings can be of direct use to us in solving our environmental problems is his love of nature and his life-long search for ways to combine both a physical scientific and a spiritual contact with nature. These, and his love of learning and of civilization, are guides to us for today and the future as we struggle to find how we can conserve our surroundings and maintain the best that human civilization can offer.

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## Notes

- 1 Thoreau, Henry David. *Walden*, J. Lyndon Shanley, ed.. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1971, 285.
- 2 In this discussion of the scientific method I am indebted to Dorothy Rosenthal, who wrote chapter 2 in Botkin, D. B. and E. A. Keller, *Environmental Science: The Earth as a Living Planet* . Third Edition. New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1999.
- 3 Thoreau, Henry David. *Cape Cod*. Joseph J. Moldenhauer, ed. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1988, 120-121.





**Michael and David Ayers in the premiere production of *The Night Thoreau Spent in Jail*, The Ohio State University, 1970.**

The Jerome Lawrence and Robert E. Lee Theatre Research Institute, The Ohio State University.

# DEVISING THE “WRITER’S SOUL” IN JEROME LAWRENCE AND ROBERT E. LEE’S THE NIGHT THOREAU SPENT IN JAIL

Robert Hubbard

The poet, described in ideal perfection, brings the whole soul of man into activity, with the subordination of its faculties to each other, according to their relative worth and dignity. He diffuses a tone and spirit of unity that blends and fuses, each into each, by that synthetic and magical power to which we have exclusively appropriated the name of imagination.—*Samuel Taylor Coleridge*<sup>1</sup>

A writer, a man writing, is the scribe of all nature.—*Henry David Thoreau*<sup>2</sup>

In every culture of every age, the ability to tell stories, to teach, to delight, to create poetry, to give nature voice through language, functions as an essential feature of human existence.<sup>3</sup> Views concerning the creation of texts and the role of the storyteller as creator vary in different ages and cultures. Roland Barthes contends that the “author” is essentially a modern phenomenon. Previously, a comparable figure was extolled not as a creator but as “mediator, shaman or relater whose ‘performance’ may be admired—the mastery of the narrative code—may possibly be admired but never his ‘genius.’”<sup>4</sup> Indeed, the image of the author as a genius, as a gifted individual with the rare ability to create meaning, survives today primarily as a holdover from the Romantic Movement.<sup>5</sup> This lasting portrait still influences contemporary perceptions. For the person with the capability to create meaning must therefore *know* the meaning; and the person who knows the meaning, perhaps the *only* person who knows the

meaning, achieves a form of omniscience. In this view, the author holds god-like properties.

Early in his career, famed literary biographer Leon Edel envisioned the figure of the author and the role of the literary biographer in idealized terms. He states that literary biography provides for a reader "every secret of a writer's soul, every quality of a writer's mind."<sup>6</sup> The use of the phrase "writer's soul" hints at a decidedly Romantic method of biographical construction, a reflection on the inherent greatness of the subject and the sanctity of the creative process.<sup>7</sup> In the following investigation, I explore the "writer's soul" idealism guiding Jerome Lawrence and Robert E. Lee's literary drama,<sup>8</sup> *The Night Thoreau Spent in Jail (TNT)*.<sup>9</sup> My examination divides into three sections. Section one contains an overview of the unique production history of *TNT*. Section two consists of identification and discussion of what Karen Mitchell refers to as "intrinsic" intertextuality.<sup>10</sup> In section three, I examine the "extrinsic" intertextual implications<sup>11</sup> realized when Lawrence and Lee's biographical portrait of Thoreau was performed in the context of the 1970s.<sup>12</sup> Through this analysis of an important literary drama, I reveal the ways in which Lawrence and Lee transform a nineteenth-century author into anti-Vietnam sage, savior and activist. This study also highlights *TNT*'s place among a dying breed of literary dramas that glorify and canonize the figure of the author as a laudable and sanctified individual.

### ***TNT* Production History**

The unique history of *TNT* begins with an organization known as the American Playwrights Theatre (APT). In 1962, at the annual conference of the American Educational Theatre Association, a panel addressed the question as to why college and university theatre seasons across the country produced such a high number of warmed-over, three-to five-year-old Broadway scripts. An especially disturbing feature of this observation grew from the widely held belief by those in attendance that these scripts were often of low quality.<sup>13</sup> Recognizing this dilemma prompted a determination that universities, ideally bastions of progress and new ideas, should serve as navigators, not passengers, in the course of the American stage. The following year, the APT was formed dedicated to the belief that "new plays of ideas of superior caliber to those recently produced on Broadway can be written and produced in the American theatre" (Guernsey 39).

The founders of the APT were a distinguished mixture of academics and commercial artists. In 1964, when the organization became incorporated, J. Osborn Fuller, Dean of Ohio State's College of Arts and Sciences, served as chairman. Trustees included W.H. Yeager, Chairman of Ohio State's Speech Department; Roy H. Boweln, director of Theatre at Ohio State; John T. Bonner, executive director of student relations at Ohio State; C. Emory Glander, attorney; Kenneth L. Graham, President of the American Educational Theatre Association; Jerome Lawrence, playwright; and Stanley Young, executive director of the American National Theatre and Academy. Edward Cole of Yale, John Morrison

of UCLA, and Frank Whiting of Minnesota were appointed to the board for their outstanding work as directors of theatre in university settings. Finally, additional board members included playwrights Robert E. Lee, Elmer Rice, and Robert Anderson. As the organization continued to evolve, William Inge, Lillian Hellman, Arthur Miller, S.N. Behrman, Arthur Laurents, William Gibson, and Horton Foote sought involvement.<sup>14</sup> Perhaps not since the days of George Pierce Baker had higher education exerted a more visible relationship with the American professional theatre.

Understandably, the involvement of Lawrence and Lee in the APT lent the organization considerable creative clout. At that time, their resume included *Inherit the Wind* (1955), *Auntie Mame* (1956), and seven other Broadway productions. However, the inaugural production of *TNT* in April of 1970 distinguished the duo as the most successful and significant dramatists in the fifteen-year history of the APT. In the subsequent year and a half after the pilot production at Ohio State University, the APT approved 141 separate productions of *TNT* across North America. In this relatively short time period, estimations suggest that more people saw the play than all Broadway performances of *Inherit the Wind* and *Auntie Mame* combined (Fink 7). For the next several years, college and university theatre programs continued to mount a remarkable number of productions, making Lawrence and Lee's drama the most produced American play of the 1970s.<sup>15</sup> By 1979, the APT's inability to commission scripts to even remotely rival *TNT*'s astonishing success, coupled with the increased production of new plays in regional theatre settings, led to the disbanding of the organization.<sup>16</sup> In retrospect, David Ayers describes Lawrence and Lee's drama as "the zenith of the American Playwrights Theatre" (qtd. in Fink 1).

The enormous popularity of *TNT* is especially remarkable because the drama was deliberately never performed on or off Broadway. In an anthology of Lawrence and Lee's plays, Alan Woods contends that the playwrights' decision not to make their play available to Broadway audiences vindicated the mission of APT by forcefully demonstrating that a living theatre could be born and continue to flourish outside of Manhattan.<sup>17</sup> However, Woods also suggests a downside connected with the lack of professional exposure:

That *TNT* still has not attracted much scholarly attention must be seen as an ironic comment on the scholarly community's lack of awareness of changes in theatrical production patterns during the past two decades, as well as on scholars ignoring evidence beneath their very noses. (Woods 452)

Subject of very little critical investigation, *TNT* achieved its enormous popularity at the same institutions that currently ignore its significance with their silence.

### Intrinsic Intertextuality Through Lifted Texts

Lawrence and Lee's preliminary notes for *TNT* contain several direct quotations from a number of Thoreau's books, essays, journals, and poems. Mitchell identifies this common form of intertextuality as "lifted texts," and defines them as those intertexts that "exist verbatim elsewhere and are incorporated into the new work" (48). Lawrence's notes alone include references and quotations from eighteen volumes by or about Thoreau (Fink 11).<sup>18</sup> The reappearance of these texts in *TNT* suggests that the playwrights relied heavily on Thoreau's autobiographical manuscripts in their scripting process. In most instances, Thoreau's language does not make the transition from source text to theatrical text without undergoing modifications in syntactical order. On a few notable occasions, however, Thoreau's words lift cleanly from his pages and land unaltered, although recontextualized, in the drama's intertextual fabric.

In his essay "Civil Disobedience," Thoreau recalls that immediately after being released from jail he "joined a huckleberry party."<sup>19</sup> Likewise, Fink cites a reference to this eccentric ritual appearing in Lawrence's notes from Henry Beetle Hough's *Thoreau of Walden*.<sup>20</sup> Although published in Hough's text, the following statement originated as one of Thoreau's journal entries:

I remember how glad I was when I was kept from school a half a day to pick huckleberries on a neighboring hill all by myself to make a pudding for the family dinner. Ah, they got nothing but the pudding, but I got the invaluable experience besides! A half a day of liberty like that was like a promise of life eternal. It was emancipation in New England. (qtd. in Fink 13-14)

A similar passage appears in *TNT* when Henry is tutoring Edward Emerson:

Huckleberry—hunting my boy! . . . Now, when I was your age—if I was ever your age—my mother used to bake Huckleberry pudding. Best in Concord. But all my Mama and my Papa and Uncle Charlie and Aunt Louisa and my brother got—all they got—was the pudding. I had the glory of discovering the huckleberries! A half-day of wild adventure under the Concord sky.<sup>21</sup>

Although the above passages clearly are not identical, their similarities nearly succeed in making the latter narrative an example of a lifted text. Both narratives mention a "half a day" set aside for picking huckleberries; they both argue that the means of the occupation (huckleberry gathering) far surpass the ends ("pudding"); and they both express a sense of the personal joy connected with spending solitary time in nature. Predictably, the differences existing between

the two passages are attributable to the manner in which the narrative is recontextualized. In the *TNT* version, Thoreau directs his statement to his young student. Gone, then, are more mature phrases, such as “A half a day of liberty like that was like a promise of life eternal” and “It was emancipation in New England.” They are replaced with the more winsome and child-like expression, “A half-day of wild adventure under the Concord sky.” These subtle alterations reconfigure Thoreau’s original quotation, making it more appropriate as a monologue within the context of the drama; these changes occur, however, without greatly distorting the basic tone and integrity of the source text.

Another example of a lifted text in *TNT*, also identified by Fink, remains even closer to the syntax of Thoreau’s source text. Lawrence’s notes on Milton Meltzer and Walter Harding’s *A Thoreau Profile* contain the following excerpt from one of Thoreau’s lectures:

I know this well, that if one thousand, if one hundred, if ten men whom I could name—if ten honest men only,—ay, if one HONEST man, if this State of Massachusetts, ceasing to hold slaves, were actually to withdraw from this partnership, and be locked up in the county jail therefore, it would be the abolition of slavery in America. (qtd. in Fink 16).

Likewise, a similar speech exists in *TNT*. After being approached by the Concord constable about his unpaid taxes, Henry makes the following speech. Throughout this address, the stage directions call for a crowd of townspeople to gather around him (*TNT* 66).

I’ll tell you this. If one thousand . . . If one hundred . . . If ten men . . . ten honest men, only . . . if one honest man in this state of Massachusetts had the conviction and the courage to withdraw from this unholy partnership and let himself be locked up in the county jail, it’d be the start of more true freedom than we’ve seen since a few farmers had the guts to block the British by the bridge up the road. (*TNT* 66; qtd. in Fink 16)

This passionate expression of “civil disobedience” eventually leads to Henry’s incarceration.

As is quickly evident, the similarities existing between these two passages, not only in meaning but also in vocabulary and syntax, make the *TNT* version an example of a lifted text. For the most part, Lawrence and Lee’s attempts to update Thoreau’s 1850’s rugged, New England prose style to match 1970’s ears account for the minor differences existing between the two versions. For example, “I know this well” is changed to, “I’ll tell you this.” “Ay, if one HONEST man” is simplified to, “if one honest man.” And, “were actually to withdraw from this partnership, and be locked up in the county jail therefore” is changed to, “had the conviction and the courage to withdraw from this unholy

partnership and let himself be locked up in the county jail.” The only blatant moment of literary license taken in the entire monologue comes at the end when the playwrights add a reference to the city of Concord’s involvement in the Revolutionary War (*TNT* 66).

### Intrinsic Intertextuality Through Allusion

Although both are forms of intertextuality, the study of “allusion” in literary drama offers a set of challenges different from the study of “lifted texts.” Rather than drawing from specific passages, allusions generally connote wider associations, such as an entire book or a set of ideas (Mitchell 48). For example, on several occasions in *TNT*, characters discuss issues of solitude, natural studies, transcendentalism, passive resistance, etc. Although most of these moments do not correlate directly with specific passages in Thoreau’s writing, they clearly refer and defer to his overall body of work. Admittedly, the limitations of performance condense many allusions to the point of superficiality. Allusion therefore helps to express Barthes’ definition of biographemes. They “reduce [themselves] to a few details, a few preferences, a few inflections” (9). Since biographemes in the form of allusions do not always refer to a specific passage within a specific text, their sources can remain blurred and difficult to pinpoint.

Even so, allusions to certain highly resonant texts dominate the intertextual fabric of *TNT*. Predictably, three of the most prominent of these source texts include *Walden*, the essay “Civil Disobedience,” and excerpts from Thoreau’s journals. It is no coincidence that copious notes from all three of these texts appear in Lawrence’s preliminary writing. A brief examination of a few of the connections between these important source texts and *TNT* illustrates the ability of allusion to fashion biography and enhance theatrical presentation.

Undeniably, ideas and locations expressed in Thoreau’s most iconic text, *Walden*, leave behind a definite signature in a performance of *TNT*. For example, Thoreau’s *Walden* amplifies any reference within the drama to something as seemingly innocent as a “pond.” In the opening moments of the drama, John Thoreau’s description of his brother as “Wild”. . . “Known to haunt the woods and ponds” (*TNT* 7) refers to more than eccentric behavior. John’s reference only foreshadows a conversation near the end of act one precipitated by Waldo’s attempts to pay Henry for his work as a maintenance man and as a teacher:

WALDO: You must have weekly wages. . .

HENRY: But must it be *money*? Could it be—(*He breaks off.*

HENRY *pauses*. WALDO and LYDIAN *stare at him strangely, as he stares way off, toward Walden, far in the back of the auditorium and beyond*) How far does it extend, your back meadow?

WALDO: To the woods . . .

HENRY: Including the woods?

WALDO: A section of it. To the shore of the pond. (*The idea is accelerating inside his head.*)

HENRY: Perhaps, some day, if my work has been useful to you, and if we remain friends, I may ask you for a bit of your woods. (Quickly) A small square, no bigger than this room. Not as a gift, I don't want to own it! Simply an understanding between friends—who know that the land really belongs to the woodchucks, anyhow! (*TNT 53*)

The deliberate and, one may argue, contrived manner in which Henry “stares way off, toward Walden” forcefully signals the significance of this allusion within the drama.

In its final manifestation, the signature of *Walden* plays a key role the dramatic action of *TNT*. Late in the drama, Henry reaches the agonizing decision to give-up his life on Walden Pond in order to pursue social change (110). Woods argues that this realization constitutes the climax of the drama, a climax set-up earlier by Thoreau's repeated pleas to Emerson to speak out against the institution of slavery and the war in Mexico (450). After much internal debate, Thoreau accepts the reality that his former idol does not possess the courage to stand against the mainstream. As a result, Thoreau realizes that, although he cannot broker support for his convictions, he must actively protest his government's policy.

The number of allusions to *Walden* found in *TNT* pales in comparison to the near saturation of material drawn from Thoreau's famous essay “Civil Disobedience.” A case could be made that the very idea for the drama is itself an allusion to the famous essay. One specific example centers on the guilt of Thoreau's unfortunate cellmate. Although he does not mention him by name in “Civil Disobedience,” Thoreau speculates as to the probable reasons for his cellmate's captivity: “As near as I could discover, he had probably gone to bed in a barn when drunk, and had smoked his pipe there” (“Civil Disobedience” 24). In *TNT*, “Bailey” grudgingly tells Henry, “All I did was snuck in to get some sleep and I guess the sparks from my pipe fell in the hay” (*TNT 12*).

Other connections between “Civil Disobedience” and *TNT* exist. For example, although the individual texts disagree as to whether Thoreau was picking up or dropping off his shoes, they both indicate that the writer's arrest occurred while he was on his way to the cobbler (“Civil Disobedience” 26; *TNT 61*). Other noteworthy examples of similarities center on Thoreau's hatred for taxation. In “Civil Disobedience,” he decries the practice of paying local taxes to support a town priest (22). Likewise, on numerous occasions, Thoreau takes aim at paying Federal taxes to fund an unjust war. These two convictions come together in *TNT* to form Henry's line: “I wouldn't pay the tithe to the church, so I signed off from the church! Well, I'm ready right now to sign off from the government” (65).

But perhaps the most memorable allusion to “Civil Disobedience” found in *TNT* comes when the lights go out. In his famous essays, Thoreau describes the sensation of lying in the darkened cell after his cellmate had drifted to sleep:

It was like traveling into a far country, such as I had never expected to behold, to lie there for one night. It seemed to me that I never had heard the town clock strike before, nor the evening sounds of the village. . . . It was to see my native village in the light of the Middle Ages, and our Concord was turned into a Rhine stream, and visions of knights and castles passed before me. They were the voices of old burghers that I heard in the streets. I was an involuntary spectator and auditor of whatever was done and said in the kitchen of the adjacent village inn—a wholly new and rare experience to me. It was a closer view of my native town. I was fairly free inside of it. I began to comprehend what its inhabitants were about. (“Civil Disobedience” 25)

Similarly, a definite allusion to Thoreau’s nighttime epiphany occurs in *TNT*. The allusion begins with the audio cue of a clock striking eleven. According to the stage directions, the sound “*dilates, louder and louder, pulsing with standing waves*” (*TNT* 42). Visibly affected, Henry addresses the darkness:

Thank you Concord! Thank you for locking me up so I’m free to hear what I’ve never heard before. You put me behind iron bars and walls four feet thick! How do you know that *I’m* not the free one? The freest man in the world! (*TNT* 40)

The similarities existing between these two passages, both in terms of context and content, threaten to overshadow what are some fairly significant differences. Among the similarities are the fact that both narratives come as a result of the solitude of the jail cell, that the ringing of a church bell inspires both epiphanies, and, to different degrees, that both narratives describe a sense of personal freedom achieved through a heightened awareness of one’s surroundings. In reducing the length of the passage to just a few lines, however, Lawrence and Lee alter the source considerably. The passage shifts from a reflective, highly descriptive acknowledgment of a transcendent experience, to an exuberant and passionate expression of intellectual superiority. In short, Lawrence and Lee’s allusion to the passage from Thoreau’s essay further contributes to their overtly favorable characterization of Thoreau. He comes across as a superior individual with a singular capacity to achieve happiness, self-awareness and personal fulfillment.

Throughout *TNT*, allusions to Thoreau’s work also appear in the form of visual and auditory symbols. For the most part, these indicators are not blatant;

they remain suggestive devices that only plant subtle clues as to the nature of Thoreau's personality and contribute to the almost filmic, memory-play quality of the overall drama. For example, a major thematic element of *Walden* is reduced to his plea, "Simplicity, simplicity, simplicity!"<sup>22</sup> Recognizing the potential usefulness of this quotation, Lawrence and Lee include it in their early notes for *TNT*.<sup>23</sup> The quotation also literally appears as a line in the drama (*TNT* 91). Indeed, Thoreau's impulse to simplify carries into performance by providing the visual core of *TNT*'s production design. Never is this strategy more apparent than in the playwrights' notes accompanying the script changes for the 1970 UCLA production:

For your production style, use Thoreau's own words:  
Simplify, simplify, simplify! The more you can omit physically and leave to the audience's imagination, the more your production will project Thoreau's own sense of economy and uncluttered order. There should be no scenes as such—they should overlap, happen simultaneously: they are not merely inside the cell, but inside this man's head—and his soul. Time is awash. Free your stage for history's free-est human being.<sup>24</sup>

As this statement indicates, Lawrence and Lee believe that the *mise-en-scene* of their production holds the potential to enhance the biographical essence of their protagonist. In short, they express a production goal in which staging decisions enable an audience to experience Thoreau's doctrine of simplification through exposure to visual metaphor.

Significantly, the impulse to simplify influences more than movement and staging choices of Lawrence and Lee's drama; it controls other elements of design as well. Perhaps the most obvious and immediate example is Thoreau himself. In their stage directions, Lawrence and Lee describe the writer as "29, clean-shaven, with liquid eyes." The description goes on to state, "His clothes are simple, the colors of the forest" (*TNT* 4). Aside from hinting at Thoreau's personal intensity, this visual portrait alludes to the writer's well-documented attempts to achieve simplicity in living. Lawrence and Lee's familiarity with these aspects of Thoreau's personality is evident in their research. Second among the eighty-five separate entries from Thoreau's journals transcribed into Lawrence's notebook is the quotation, "Beware of all enterprises that require new clothes."<sup>25</sup> Moreover, the decision to costume Thoreau in "the colors of the forest" makes use of yet another commonly held biographeme of the writer: Thoreau as a man of nature, a student of the earth.

On a scribbled floor plan accompanying a 1969 draft of *TNT*, Lawrence reveals the influence of Thoreau's environmentalist beliefs on his visual conception of the play.<sup>26</sup> Calling for a theatre with a thrust stage, this outline consists of four main acting areas. Three include a semblance of a jail cell, an area for scenes involving Ralph Waldo Emerson, and an area for scenes involving

Thoreau's immediate family. Significantly, these three areas are located upstage, leaving the entire thrust available for what Lawrence labels as "Walden and Nature and Reality."<sup>27</sup> Since large portions of *TNT* are set at Thoreau's famous cabin, on or near Walden Pond, or in fields and meadows in the Concord area, the decision to place these scenes, and only these scenes, on the thrust clearly separates them from the rest of the drama. Presentational portraits of natural settings literally become injected into the audience's habitat, emphasizing their importance.

Predictably, lighting design represents yet another tool used to further emphasize Thoreau's relationship with nature. Before collaborating with Lee, Lawrence composed an early draft of the play entitled "A Different Drummer." This version contains the following scenic description:

leafy projections of trees in spring, summer and autumn, the bare branches of the limbs hung with the snow in winter. Dawns, sunsets, starry nights alive with milky-way made close by the forest's darkness—all will be suggested subtly by lighting. These are the moods of a man's mind, the free-est mind ever.<sup>28</sup>

As was his practice, Lee edited Lawrence's scene descriptions in later revisions. Nonetheless, Lawrence's initial description illustrates a desire to use lighting to suggest a number of organic locations while simultaneously reinforcing the aesthetic that the entire drama exists inside Thoreau's mind. Evidently, individual productions took advantage of the benefits of visually integrating elements of nature settings into performance. Jonathan Lennebach's projector notes from the 1970 production at UCLA call for rear-screen projections of Walden Pond, Heywood's Meadow, and a wide assortment of trees.<sup>29</sup>

Finally, costume, scene, and lighting are not the only intertextual design elements with the potential to create character and enhance theatrical presentation. The closing moments of *TNT* provide a powerful example of how a sound may serve as an audio biographeme. Arguably, no quotation from Thoreau's writing is more identifiable than his famous defense of non-conformity: "If a man does not keep pace with his companions, perhaps it is because he hears a different drummer. Let him step to the music which he hears, however measured or far away." Ironically, Lawrence and Lee's use of this statement, generally interpreted as a "live and let live" anthem, underscores Thoreau's decision to leave Walden in order to more aggressively pursue social change. As he exits his prison cell, the final stage directions describe his reaction:

*In the doorway, HENRY stops, looks up sharply. From a distance, he hears an eccentric, non-military drummer. He moves into Concord Square ablaze with morning light. Suddenly, the drumbeat comes from a different direction,*

*growing in volume. It is like thunder all around him. His eyes follow the arc of the sky. He seems to grow in stature, lifted and strengthened by a great challenge. He waves to BAILEY, who waves back warmly from the cell window. With determination, HENRY leaps from the stage and strides up the aisles of the theatre to the sound of his own different drummer. No curtain falls. The lights do not fade, but grow brighter. During the curtain calls, and as the audience leaves the theatre, HENRY's distinctive and irregular drum-cadence builds and resounds. (TNT 110-111)*

Significantly, this is the first and only direct reference to "a different drummer" in the entire text. Clearly, Lawrence and Lee recognize the importance of the allusion and deliberately make it the final experience of the production. Transformed into a sound cue of a sporadic drum beat, Thoreau's quotation supplies the denouement of the drama; in doing so, it provides a clear example of intertextuality's ability to shape and influence literary drama.

As should be increasingly clear, visual and auditory allusions fulfill many important functions in a performance of *TNT*. Seamlessly integrated into the performance event, these allusions reinforce widely held biographical views of Thoreau. Staging, costume, scenic, and lighting choices only strengthen the writer's overall status as a seeker of simplicity, a naturalist, and a nonconformist with a social conscience. Any incongruities and inconsistencies lurking behind these portrayals go unexplored and untouched. The writer emerges as the embodiment of his texts, a figure of esteem and bardolatry.

### **Intrinsic Intertextuality Through Found Discourse**

Entries from Thoreau's private journals represent the third dominant source text leading to the creation of *TNT*. Texts such as journal entries fall into the category of what Mitchell refers to as "found discourse." Similar to lifted texts but unlike allusion, found discourse consists of quotations taken from documents surrounding an author's life. Found discourse differs from lifted texts in that the source of the intertext usually is not a document originally intended for publication or public consumption (Mitchell 50). The publication of edited volumes of Thoreau's journals in the late nineteenth century drastically hastened the growth of the writer's reputation as the "Poet-Naturalist."<sup>30</sup> No surprise should be taken, then, that Lawrence and Lee recorded over seventy-two individual entries from Thoreau's journals into their preliminary notes on the play. Clearly the playwrights recognized the importance of these entries as a biographical tool in the creation of Thoreau's theatrical persona.

Of all of Thoreau's journal entries that influence *TNT*, none does so more prominently than an entry dated 1 October, 1851. The following quotation comes from Lawrence's notes:

Just put a fugitive slave, who has taken the name of Henry Williams, into the cars for Canada. . . . Intended to dispatch him at noon through to Burlington, but when I went to buy his ticket, saw one at the depot who looked and behaved so much like a Boston policeman that I did not venture that time. Williams, a mulatto, an intelligent and very well-behaved man. ("Notes on *Thoreau's Journals*" 15:4)

Lawrence indicates his belief in the theatrical potential of this journal entry by interjecting a capitalized phrase into the middle of the passage. The phrase reads, "WHAT A DRAMATIC INCIDENT HERE!"

Occasionally, Thoreau volunteered his home as a station along the Underground Railroad.<sup>31</sup> Likewise, anti-slavery sentiments permeate much of his writing and are referred to on a number of occasions in *TNT*. By far the most direct allusion appears in a scene involving the same "Williams" mentioned in Thoreau's journal entry. Set near Thoreau's cabin on Walden Pond, the scene depicts the runaway slave stumbling upon Henry as he is working in his bean garden. After getting over their mutual surprise, the two men have a conversation in which Henry offers the terrified Williams food and pithy platitudes about achieving personal freedom. In one line he states, "I welcome you here, but. . . you've got to find your *own* Walden where they don't have sickening laws which keep the black man in suppression" (*TNT* 91). Williams is so impressed by their conversation, he decides to take the first name "Henry." The scene ends with Thoreau putting his hand on Henry Williams' shoulder and telling him to "Go to Canada," the point being that true freedom is impossible under the United States' current policies.

Within the context of the overall drama, the "Henry Williams" scene serves several theatrical functions. The pivotal scene depicting the fracture between Henry and Waldo immediately follows Henry's scene with Williams. In fact, it is the news that Williams has been recaptured by a "Boston policeman"<sup>32</sup> that pushes Henry to make demands upon his mentor, Emerson. These demands eventually lead to the rift between the two men and one of *TNT*'s central conflicts. Moreover, aside from contributing to a sense of rising action, the allusion to Thoreau's journal entry also provides yet another example of how intertexts from Thoreau's writing are used to portray the writer in the best of possible lights. He comes across in the scene as a daring abolitionist who selflessly shares his food, his home, and his ideas with those less fortunate than himself.

Regrettably, however, Thoreau's glorification comes at the expense of Williams' characterization. Similar to the character of Thoreau's cellmate, Bailey, Williams' depiction makes him a poor candidate to carry on a conversation with the great Thoreau; he becomes instead a foil for the writer's racial and social wisdom. Unlike Bailey, however, Williams' deficiencies in intellect carry with them a racially motivated stigma. Rather than functioning in the scene as "intelligent" and "well-behaved," as he is described in Thoreau's journal entry

(even this obviously sympathetic description is slightly troubling by contemporary standards), Williams comes across as the stereotype of the run-away slave: silly, malleable, unintelligent and comically skittish. The manner in which Lawrence and Lee depict Williams' desire to take Thoreau's first name is as contradictory as it is misguided. Henry spends much of the scene affirming the benefits of self-expression and nonconformity. After hearing this, Williams inexplicably asks the writer if he can take "Henry" as a first name. Only more absurd is the fact that Henry agrees, but tells him that "David" might be a better choice because he doesn't use it much (*TNT* 90).

### **Extrinsic Intertextuality: Thoreau in the Context of the 1970's**

In his review of the 1970 Washington, D.C. production of *TNT*, Clive Barnes prophetically concludes, "It is a play that I think will find a strong empathy in college and high school students."<sup>33</sup> To this point, my study has dealt exclusively with intrinsic intertextuality. This term designates intertextual material transcribed directly from its source text into the performance text, or, to be colloquial, from the page to the stage (Mitchell 45). In order to appreciate the remarkable accuracy of Barnes' prediction, the focus of my study must now shift to a discussion of "extrinsic" intertextuality. This classification does not specifically pertain to what exists on the printed page or what appears in the visual language of performance but deals primarily with the audience response and social context in which a text finds performance (Mitchell 46). In short, an extrinsic intertextual analysis provides a means to better understand and investigate the unprecedented popularity of *TNT* on American colleges and universities throughout the 1970s. It also sheds light on the play's current lack of appeal in both the academic and professional theatre.

A description of the tumultuous social context in which the majority of performances of *TNT* occurred serves as the first step toward understanding the remarkable appeal of the drama. It is no coincidence that the height of *TNT*'s popularity corresponded with the United States' highest level of involvement in the Vietnam War. In large part due to the military draft, colleges and universities throughout the country swelled to record enrollments. In turn, the influx of new students strongly opposed to military service helped to make settings of higher education the front-lines in the anti-war movement against the government's Vietnam policy. *TNT*'s development as a script of the National Playwrights' Theatre necessitated that the vast majority of its performances occur within these politically aggressive environments. Of all the campus demonstrations and riots of the early 1970s across the U.S., arguably the most egregious conflict took place on 4 May, 1970, on the campus of Kent State University. In this fateful instance, four students died and nine were wounded when National Guardsmen shot into a crowd of demonstrators. It is of more than passing significance that the inaugural production of Lawrence and Lee's drama took place on the campus of another major university in the state of Ohio only months after the Kent State massacre.

Indeed, many scenes, lines, and images from *TNT* take on added force when viewed through the social context of 1970s college life. The most obvious association likely to provoke audience response are the inevitable comparisons between the Vietnam War and Thoreau's efforts to discredit his government's involvement in the Mexican-American War. In a conversation with Bailey occurring early in Act One, Henry compares the qualities of a bird with the bureaucracy of federal government: "A loon doesn't wage war, his government is perfect, being nonexistent" (12). Later, in a conversation with his jailer, Henry expresses similar views referring to the Mexican American War: "What the government of this country is doing turns my stomach! And if I keep my mouth shut, I'm a criminal. To my Conscience. To my God. To Society" (67). The anti-war theme continues later in the drama during the pivotal scene between Henry and Emerson. Desperate to inspire his mentor to action, Henry pleads, "Can you lift your right hand to your mouth while your left hand—which is also you—your government—is killing men in Mexico?" (94). As is quickly evident from these examples, a 1970s student audience could easily perceive parallels between *TNT* and the United States' military actions in the Vietnam.

But never are parallels between the Mexican-American and Vietnam Wars more directly apparent than in *TNT*'s climactic dream sequence. In this bizarre scene, described in the stage directions in the unmistakable vernacular of the 1960's and 1970's drug culture as "a bad trip" (101), Henry confronts many horrifying images of war. Significant figures from his past play the roles of soldiers on their way to battle. Refusing to go, Henry endures a barrage of insults from his drafted Concord neighbors, such as "Coward," "Slacker," "Traitor," "Deserter," "Heathen," and "Vagrant" (101). Even more disturbing statements occur when the soldiers march in unison to cadences of "Hate-two-three-four!" and "Learn to kill!" (102). The stage directions record the punctuation of this disturbing scene:

*Deafening artillery fire peaks in volume. There are great flashes of light, the arcing of mortar shells, the staccato splattering of bullets. The Federal troops form into a ragged line of attacking infantrymen. They point their muskets front and move slowly forward, advancing on the audience as if they were the enemy.*  
(104)

With no attempts at subtlety, Lawrence and Lee design Henry's hallucination to play on a number of images from student life during the Vietnam era. Obvious examples include friends forced into military service, harsh accusations on those who refuse to fight, and horrific scenes of battle (images made disturbingly real during the 1970s by the practice of showing gruesome footage nightly on the evening news). But by far the most inciting image in the dream sequence takes place when the band of soldiers threaten to attack innocent civilians sitting passively in the audience. In the context of the Vietnam War in

general, this action feeds off popular perceptions that the citizens of the Southeast Asian country suffered as innocent victims of American diplomacy. But, in the smaller context of a performance of *TNT* in a university setting, the image of "Federal Troops" firing weapons into a crowd of students evokes definite comparisons to the Kent State incident.

Aside from references to the Vietnam War, other extratextual allusions to social action in the form of student protests abound in *TNT*. One of the most persistent of these allusions deals with the ways the drama questions, discredits, and eventually discounts all symbols of authority. Examples include the many caustic references to government; the open disrespect for organized systems of religion, education, and justice; and the gradual devaluation of the status of Emerson. The harsh portrayal of these institutions and Thoreau's gradual separation from them contribute to a depiction of the writer as the physical embodiment of a popular 1960s counter-culture anthem: "question authority."

Similar to the allusions to Vietnam, the many anti-establishment allusions reach fruition in the drama's climactic dream sequence. In this scene, Emerson is depicted as the president of the United States; he soon engages in a conversation with the chairman of the Concord Board of Education, Ball, who is depicted as a military general. As the mortar shells fly, Ball confronts Emerson with the statement, "Mr. President, the military advises that we conquer the entire territory. Level them all to rubble! Are you prepared to go along?" (102). Emerson eventually fumbles the following response:

I wish more time to collect my thoughts. So I am going to appoint a committee to appoint a committee to appoint a committee. (*Cheers.*) Get to the bottom of this, so the top will know what to do! (102)

The symbolism of this exchange is as blatant as it is biting. Within the context of *TNT*, Emerson and Ball represent the two most identifiable symbols of authority and the establishment. By the end of the drama, neither of them is portrayed in an even remotely positive light. Their theatrical metamorphosis into highly powerful political and a military figures systematically decries far reaching symbols of authority. Furthermore, Emerson's depiction as an incoherent pawn of the military meshes nicely with 1960s and 1970s views of American presidents as poorly equipped to function effectively and objectively as commanders-in-chief.

Finally, Lawrence and Lee's attempts to deal with issues of slavery and race resonate with undeniable parallels to the civil rights and passive resistance movements in the 1960s and 1970s. Two moments in the drama stand out in particular. Henry's statements advising Williams to "Go to Canada" (91) could easily be interpreted both as a denunciation of social inequality, and as validation of the practice of draft-dodging in order to avoid living in the confines of what

many young people believed to be an oppressive government. Williams' reappearance as a Mexican soldier during Henry's dream sequence only further contemporizes issues of race. As American soldiers shoot at his fleeing figure, one of them shouts, "Dirty Nigger-Spice! He got away!" (103). Judging from these remarks, Williams fulfills the role of the ridiculed other, an object of racist aggression and discrimination. The fact that the soldiers attempt to shoot him as he flees forcefully illustrates the racial divide of a society breaking apart by defamatory prejudices.

The many allusions in *TNT* to the Vietnam War, anti-establishmentism, and racial injustice are by no means coincidental or accidental phenomenon. In a transcript of a 1968 meeting between Lawrence and Lee and the board of the APT, Lawrence recites to the board a statement made by Thoreau:

The whole country is unjustly over-run and conquered by a foreign army and subject to military law, and in that case, I think it's not too soon for honest men to rebel and revolutionize.<sup>34</sup>

In itself, this quotation seems consistent with Thoreau's other statements against the Mexican-American War expressed in numerous intertexts in *TNT*. However, Lawrence's statement directly preceding this quotation emphasizes contemporary parallels. He plainly admits, "I read a quote, which Thoreau said, that sounds as if he's writing about Vietnam." Lawrence's statement, made two years prior to the final revisions of *TNT*, proves a conscious desire on the part of the playwright to capitalize on existing parallels between Thoreau's writing and the Vietnam War.

Indeed, throughout the development of *TNT*, Lawrence and Lee emphasized the contemporary relevancy of their concept for the drama. In the very first sentence of the preface to the Hill and Wang publication, the playwrights openly state, "The man imprisoned in our play belongs more to the 1970s than to the age in which he lived" (vii). Likewise, the program notes to the 1970 production at Chicago's Goodman Theatre contain similar sentiments. Although they claim to be "scrupulously accurate" in their portrayal, Lawrence and Lee admit to throwing their "own light onto the shadow of the man" in order to allow "the spirit of Henry David Thoreau" to be "more alive in the Seventies than it was in the middle of the last century, when he lived."<sup>35</sup> Lawrence and Lee take their biographical task even further than admitting similarities between Thoreau's writing and their turbulent age. In their preface to the play, they state:

Time is awash in the jail cell. We are not trapped in happenings past, but are concerned about THE NOW THOREAU—the explosive spirit who addressed himself to the perils of our time with more power and clarity than most angry young men writing about it now. (viii)

By admitting the fact that they are “not trapped in happenings past,” Lawrence and Lee indicate that their interpretation of Thoreau, or, as they put it, “THE NOW THOREAU,” may be *more* influenced by the events of 1960s and 1970s than by social context of the middle 1800s. Ultimately, the clearest indication of the playwrights’ desires to heighten and redirect Thoreau’s political agenda may be found in minutes of an APT board meeting. In an attempt to express the urgency of their project, Lawrence states, “We need a Thoreau who is more like Thoreau than Thoreau” (qtd. in “Meeting with APT Board” 16:1). Aside from helping with practical concerns of dramatization, this degree of dramatic license enables the playwrights to use Thoreau unabashedly as a mouthpiece for their contemporary political causes.

### **Conclusions: Seamless Intertexts and the Author as Sage, Savior, and Activist**

As this study of *TNT* indicates, Lawrence and Lee’s use of intrinsic intertextuality to create a biographical depiction of Thoreau corresponds with Edel’s idyllic “writer’s soul” objective for literary biography. Lawrence and Lee’s “NOW THOREAU” exists as a blameless idealist and a tireless social avenger. Rarely does the essayist/poet/naturalist’s mouth fail to spring forth the perfect phrase, the right idea, or the appropriate indictment. Cursed with being the only person with the foresight and courage to change the wrong-headed and destructive policies of his community and government, Henry resolves to struggle against the system. Granting his listeners wisdom, fighting for those too weak or ignorant to fight for themselves, and sacrificing his lifestyle for an ideal, Thoreau becomes the theatrical embodiment of the talented, enlightened, selfless author: a visage of Romantic expectation.

The selection and method of placement of intertextuality play a key role in the theatrical creation of Thoreau as Romantic hero. Nearly every instance of intertextuality in *TNT*—whether lifted, allusion, or found—conforms to what Mitchell refers to as a “seamless” method of placement. Seamless intertexts, according to Mitchell, furnish a playwright with the ability to conceal and expunge otherwise glaring incongruities in the triangular relationship between text, intertext, and author (47). This is to say that, although minor and expected alterations do occur between text and intertext in *TNT*, the intertexts themselves always affirm and never negate or question the integrity of their source text. Likewise, the integrity of Thoreau’s carefully crafted literary persona never comes into question in Lawrence and Lee’s drama. Even the extrinsic metaphorical parallels between Thoreau’s writings and the cultural climate of the 1970s accentuate and elevate the positive expectations of Edel’s “writer’s soul.” By choosing only the most upbeat and flattering of intertexts, Lawrence and Lee leave no room in their idealized portrait for the often stodgy, disillusioned, and

cynical figure also apparent in much of Thoreau's writing. With no apologies, their "NOW THOREAU" exists as a purification of what we might guess to be the "THEN THOREAU."

In terms of issues of characterization and theatrical effectiveness, *TNT*'s highly Romantic depiction of the author poses some problems to the skeptical sensibilities of a contemporary audience. While today's theatre-goers may still delight in Thoreau's noble attempts to change the system, they never really get an opportunity to see him change. Always witty, intelligent, and indomitable, Henry displays no chinks in his armor. He is almost completely immutable. Despite his charisma and intelligence, Lawrence and Lee's Thoreau borders the terrain of the stock figure, the stereotype or the one-dimensional character. To use an analogy from popular culture, the Thoreau in *TNT* suffers from the same disadvantage as Superman. With all his powers, intelligence, and goodness, Superman makes a predictable protagonist. Lawrence and Lee might have been well served to follow the lead of the creators of the man of steel and inject a little Kryptonite into their drama.

Still, part of me is saddened by the fact that the Romantic image of Thoreau as expressed in *TNT* now seems contrived and in need of revision. The enormous and unprecedented popular appeal of the drama during the 1970s clearly indicates that the original audience did not view Thoreau's moral perfection as a problem. The relative obscurity of the play in 1980s and 1990s points to a hardening of the arteries of our collective idealism. Whether this disillusion comes as a result of a failed social revolution or as a component of the diminished reverence given to authors in society is unclear. What is clear, however, is that Lawrence and Lee's "NOW THOREAU" no longer rings true. Far from expressing Edel's image of "the writer's soul," many of today's literary dramas instead seek to indict or crucify our authors. Tom Dulack's lacerating depiction of Ezra Pound in *Incommunicado*, Michael Hasting's freezing portrait of T.S. Eliot in *Tom and Viv*, and Joan Schenkar's monstrous parody of Henry James in *Signs of Life* exist as three examples. Although our fascination with authors survives into postmodernity, our desire to emulate and celebrate them at times seems as far away as the night Thoreau spent in jail.

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## Notes

- 1 Coleridge, Samuel Taylor. *Biographia Literaria. The Norton Anthology of English Literature*. Fifth Edition. Ed. M.H. Abrams (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1987), 1600.
- 2 Thoreau, Henry David. *The Heart of Thoreau's Journals*. Ed. Odell Shepard (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1927), 84.
- 3 Lord, Albert Bates. *The Singer of Tales* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960), viii.

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- 4 Barthes, Roland. *Image, Music, Text* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), 142.
- 5 Watson, George. "Are Poems Historical Acts?" *Contexts for Criticism*. Ed. Donald Keeseey (Mountain View CA: Mayfield, 1994), 30.
- 6 Edel, Leon. *Literary Biography* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1959), 43.
- 7 Approximately twenty years later, in his essay "The Figure Under the Carpet," Edel tellingly modifies his Romantic terminology of the "writer's soul" to something more reflective of modern and postmodern distrust of the author's significance. In this later text, he states that the primary task of the literary biographer is to identify the "mask" of the biographical subject. "In doing this," he writes, "we have won half the battle. The other half is his real battle, the most difficult part of his task—his search for what I call the figure under the carpet, the evidence in the reverse of the tapestry, the life-myth of a given mask." Edel, Leon. "The Figure Under the Carpet." *Telling Lives: The Biographer's Art* (Washington: New Republic Books, 1979), 24-25.
- 8 I use the term "literary drama" to designate a collection of biographical performance texts in which actual authors serve as primary characters. To date, I've located over eighty such dramas. Recent examples include John Hare's *The Judas Kiss* and the Oscar winning film, *Shakespeare in Love*. For a detailed definition and discussion of Literary Drama, see Hubbard, Robert. "The Author on the Boards: Intertextuality, Biography, and Literary Biographical Drama." Dissertation. Bowling Green State University, 1995. Ronald Shields, Advisor.
- 9 Lawrence and Lee commonly abbreviate the titles of their plays for reference purposes. For example, their correspondences contain references to *ITW* (*Inherit the Wind*), *GAH* (*The Gang's All Here*), *TIM* (*The Incomparable Max*), etc. In one letter, Lee comments, "Imagine our delight the first time we referred to *The Night Thoreau Spent in Jail* as *TNT*! It was accidental, so help me—but we think it fits the play: explosive!" (qtd. in Gerrard, Gene. "New Play Has World Premiere." *The Columbus Citizen Journal*, 22 April 1970: 12.)
- 10 Mitchell, Karen. "Seamless Intertexts: Extrinsic and Intrinsic Intertextuality and Emily Mann's Execution of Justice." *Text and Performance Quarterly* 13 (1993): 44-60. "Intrinsic" intertextuality, according to Mitchell, describes intertextual material transcribed directly from its source text into the performance text. Mitchell provides four categories of intrinsic intertextuality: lifted texts, allusion, found discourse, and cultural discourse (48). The first three are especially useful for the needs of this study and warrant a brief explanation at this time. "Lifted texts" are those intertexts that "exist verbatim elsewhere and are

incorporated into the new work" (48). The most common example of lifted texts within literary drama are excerpts of poetry or prose taken from an author's work. Mitchell describes the intertextual properties of "allusion" as "the tacit references of one text to another in which the reference signals the text's previous context" (48). In these moments of intertextuality, the primary text is present, but only as a referent. As a biographical tool, the effects of allusion may vary greatly. Allusion may serve as something as innocent as a look into the future. For example in *TNT*, the title character repeatedly refers to the theories associated in his writing, even though the theatrical persona has not yet written much of the source material to which he is "alluding." Finally, intertexts in the form of "found discourse" compose a powerful tool in the creation of biography in *LBD*. Examples include recorded interviews, speeches, trial transcripts, private letters, and other documentation. Mitchell describes this form of intertextuality as "extremely covert" because it is virtually impossible for audience members to "distinguish 'found discourse' from 'fictionalized discourse' without the help of extratextual sources" (50).

11 "Extrinsic" intertextuality derives from the reader-centered theories of John Fiske, Robert Scholes, and Roland Barthes and is used to predict and explain the personal reactions a reader carries for a text (Mitchell 46). This is to say that extrinsic intertextuality only exists in the response of the audience; it appears nowhere on the printed page or in the visual language of performance. As an example of this condition, Mitchell refers to audience/text dynamics occurring when a film set in the 1960s, such as Oliver Stone's *JFK*, is performed in the context of the 1990s.

12 All three sections of this investigation are aided greatly by time spent in the Lawrence and Lee Collection held exclusively within the Jerome Lawrence and Robert E. Lee Research Institute at The Ohio State University. A gift from Lawrence and Lee to their alma mater, this collection contains 672 plays (many signed and inscribed), 221 other books, 691 playbills, 7 original manuscripts, 145 photographs, 324 journal and magazine articles, 2 video tapes, one cassette tape, several transcripts of interviews, personal letters, clippings, etc.

13 Guernsey, Otis L., ed. *The Best Plays of 1969-70* (New York: Dodd, Mead, and Company, 1971), 40.

14 Fink, Lawrence E. "From Thought to Theatre: Creation, Development, and Production of *The Night Thoreau Spent in Jail* by Jerome Lawrence and Robert E. Lee." master's thesis. Allen Woods, Advisor. 3-4.

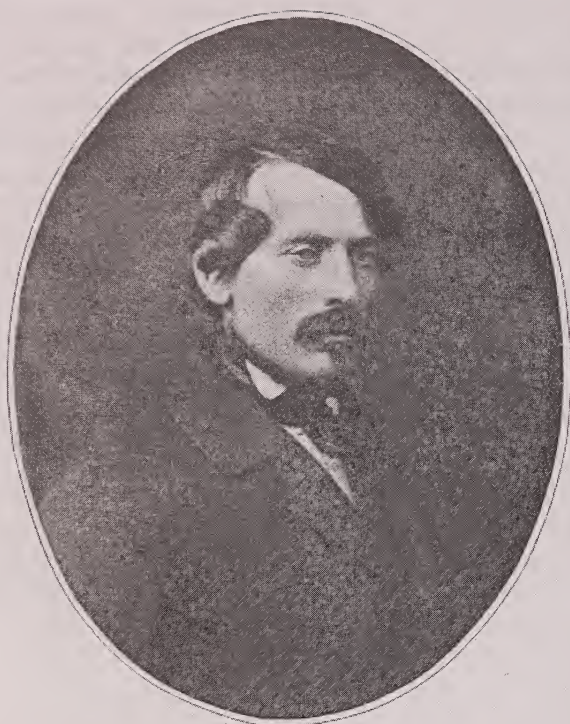
15 Berkowitz, Gerald. *New Broadways: Theatre across America, 1959-1980* (Totowa, N.J.: Rowan and Littlefield, 1982), 80.

16 O'Reily, William. "The Office of Advanced Drama Research Closes." *TCG Newsletter* (October 1977): 1.

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- 17 Woods, Alan., ed. *The Selected Plays of Jerome Lawrence and Robert E. Lee* (Columbus, Ohio: Ohio State University Press, 1995), 452.
- 18 The information I use from Fink's study draws from a variety of news releases and memos located in the American Playwrights Collection housed at The Ohio State University. Fink deserves credit for indexing this information into a usable format, thus saving an immense amount of time tracking down individual sources. Although indebted to it, my study builds and goes beyond Fink's investigation. Whereas Fink's work is primarily descriptive of the source texts comprising *TNT*, my analysis draws conclusions as to how the placement of these texts influences the overall theatricality of the play and helps to fashion a Romantically inspired biographical persona.
- 19 Thoreau, Henry David. "Civil Disobedience." *Henry David Thoreau: Selected Writings*. Ed. Lawrence Leary (Arlington Heights, Illinois: AHM Publishing Corporation, 1958), 26.
- 20 Fink identifies a number of quotations taken from Thoreau's writings that appear in *TNT*. By his own admission, his access to Lawrence and Lee's preliminary notes for the play made Fink's location of lifted texts considerably easier. Aside from famous quotations such as "a different drummer" and "Simplify, simplify, simplify," the detection of lifted texts in *TNT* would otherwise come down to scanning large numbers of pages in hopes of identifying syntactical similarities with passages from the drama. But by recording their source material in their notebook, Lawrence and Lee greatly reduced the difficulties of locating seamlessly placed, lifted texts.
- 21 *The Night Thoreau Spent in Jail* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1970), 78. also qtd. in Fink 14.
- 22 Thoreau, Henry David. *Walden* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Press/Double Day, 1973), 80.
- 23 Lawrence, Jerome and Robert E. Lee. "Thoreau Plums." *Lawrence and Lee Collection* 17:11. n.p.: The Ohio State University, 1969; n. pag.
- 24 Lawrence, Jerome and Robert E. Lee. "Preliminary Directing Notes." *Lawrence and Lee Collection* 16:11. n.p.: The Ohio State University, 1970: n. pag.
- 25 Lawrence, Jerome. "Notes on *Thoreau's Journals*." *Lawrence and Lee Collection* 15:4. n.p.: The Ohio State University, n.d. n. pag.
- 26 Since this early draft was written almost exclusively by Lawrence, I am estimating that he is responsible for the scribbling the preliminary floor plan.
- 27 Lawrence, Jerome. "Lawrence Floor Plan." *Lawrence and Lee Collection* 16:1. n.p.: The Ohio State University, 1969. n. pag.
- 28 Lawrence, Jerome. "A Different Drummer" (typed manuscript). *Lawrence and Lee Collection* 16:1. n.p.: The Ohio State University, 1968.

- 29      Lennebach, Jonathan. "Projector Notes." *Lawrence and Lee Collection* 16:17. n.p.: The Ohio State University, 1970: n. pag.
- 30      Shepard, Odell. Introduction. *The Heart of Thoreau's Journals* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1927), v.
- 31      Whicher, George F. *Walden Revisited: A Centennial Tribute to Henry David Thoreau* (New York: Packard and Company, 1945), 91.
- 32      Note that the words "Boston policeman" are taken directly from Thoreau's journal entry. The journal entry does not, however, provide any indication that Williams was ever apprehended by the policeman.
- 33      Barnes, Clive. "Lawrence and Lee Cull Action from a Night." *New York Times* 2 Nov. 1970, natl. ed: 66.
- 34      Lawrence, Jerome. "Meeting with APT Board." *Lawrence and Lee Collection* 16:1. n.p.: The Ohio State University, 1968. n. pag.
- 35      Lawrence, Jerome and Robert R. Lee. "Goodman Program Notes." *Lawrence and Lee Collection* 17:2. n.p.: The Ohio State University, 1970. n. pag.





*Your affectionate Son*  
*John Mitchel*

*Engraved by Thomas & Agnew*

*Ætat 39.*

**John Mitchel**  
From William Dillon's *Life of John Mitchel*

# “Slavery in Massachusetts” and Mitchel’s *Citizen*: Rhetoric, Reform and Reprobates in 1854

Chris L. Nesmith

In “Slavery in Massachusetts” Henry David Thoreau wrote that “One whom I respect told me that he purchased Mitchell’s *Citizen* in the cars, and then threw it out the window.” Since Thoreau, by his own admission, was “not a newspaper reader,”<sup>1</sup> we can forgive the fact that he may have misspelled the last name of the *Citizen*’s editor, John Mitchel.<sup>2</sup> Less excusable, however, is that the misspelling appeared when Thoreau’s essay was first printed, in *The Liberator* on 21 July 1854, since that journal’s editor, William Lloyd Garrison, was well familiar with Mitchel and his newspaper.<sup>3</sup> Although Horace Greeley later corrected the mistake when he reprinted Thoreau’s lecture in the *New-York Daily Tribune*, 2 August, the editor of the standard modern edition of the work considered this change one “of the more than 200 variants in the *Tribune* text [which] can be accounted for as printer’s corruptions” (333). Since no scholar has ever glossed the reference, the name has come down to us misspelled since Thoreau’s day, and we might tend to think of the comment as one made in passing about an obscure newspaper and its editor which Thoreau happened to name where he might have used any number of others.

Thoreau’s remark, however, suggests that he was familiar with Mitchel’s *Citizen* and that he expected his audience to be familiar with it too. And in fact when Thoreau denounced Mitchel’s name in his famous antislavery lecture, he was continuing what had become—for the past six months, at least—a frequently employed tactic of many antislavery speeches. Thoreau and his audience would certainly have heard Mitchel’s name castigated on numerous occasions to resounding choruses of boos and hisses if they had attended any antislavery

rallies throughout New England and New York that year; but Thoreau, in his usual iconoclastic style, challenges his audience to recognize their own complicity in buying *The Citizen* rather than to gratify their desire to vociferously denounce the name of its editor. Only in this context can a reader today fully understand that a remark seemingly made in passing was in fact not only part of a larger controversy between abolitionists and an arch-conservative newspaper editor, but also a comment on the Abolitionist movement as a whole and upon the role of individual responsibility within the movement.

John Mitchel is known to Irish history as one of the leaders of the “Young Irelanders” movement of the mid-1840s, advocating the repeal of the 1800 Irish Act of Union with Great Britain. Born near Dunvigen, Ireland, in 1817, Mitchel studied law after graduating from Trinity College and moved to Dublin after being admitted to the bar. He was invited in 1845 to join the staff at the *Nation*, a newspaper committed to Irish Nationalism.<sup>4</sup> Mitchel and other members of the movement broke away from the more conservative leadership of Daniel O’Connell to found the radical Irish Confederation in 1847.<sup>5</sup> In the wake of a failed uprising the next year, led by fellow Confederation leader William Smith O’Brien, Mitchel was arrested by the British government and sentenced with O’Brien and others, including Thomas Meagher, to fourteen years exile in Van Diemen’s Land (now Tasmania).<sup>6</sup> *The London Times* reported that, in transporting Mitchel “The head and shoulders had been taken from the revolutionary movement” in Ireland.<sup>7</sup> While in Australia, Mitchel wrote his most famous book, *Jail Journal, or Five Years in British Prisons*. In 1853 he escaped to San Francisco and made his way to New York, where his entire family had emigrated from Ireland some years before. After this “few historians have followed Mitchel to America and the long second career he had as an American newspaper writer and publisher.”<sup>8</sup> In tracing that career, undoubtedly many of these historians—like Mitchel’s contemporaries—did not know what to make of his fervent defense of American slavery once in the United States.

When he arrived in New York, Mitchel received a hero’s reception, and a banquet attended by prominent Americans and leading Irish-Americans was given in his honor. Mitchel, in his journal, confided that the idea for a new newspaper was conceived within a few weeks of his arrival in New York, and he and fellow-escapee Thomas Meagher joined together to launch *The Citizen*, which first appeared on 7 January 1854. Mitchel’s biographer, William Dillon, tells us that “The success of the *Citizen* at its start was probably without precedent in the history of American journalism. Within a few weeks of its commencement, the paper reached a circulation of fifty thousand. The paper would undoubtedly have . . . yielded its owner a large income, had he but been willing to be governed by maxims of prudence” (2:49-50).<sup>9</sup> The prospectus of the paper, printed in that first number, claims that the chief concern of the paper would be the cause of

Irish independence. But it quickly became embroiled in the politics of America, and at that time this meant the issue of slavery.

*The Citizen*, like many other newspapers at the time, reviewed lectures, and during that winter, one of the more popular series of lectures was delivered before the New York City Anti-Slavery Society at the Broadway Tabernacle. In the second issue of *The Citizen*, 14 January 1854, Mitchel reviewed the fourth lecture in that series, “delivered by Charles Lenox Remond, of Salem, Mass., a gentleman of color. Remond’s father was a highly respectable colored citizen, and kept an oyster cellar at Salem. He accumulated property, and gave his children a good education.”<sup>10</sup> Mitchel’s review is relatively objective and unopinionated, merely reporting the speaker’s main points. Reading the review, it is impossible to tell where on slavery Mitchel himself stood. But in that same issue, he published a response to a letter written by one of his old acquaintances back in Dublin addressing that question.

The letter to Mitchel and Meagher was from James Haughton, an Irish abolitionist who had known both men in Dublin. He sought to ensure that they, as representatives of Ireland, would “prove themselves true men by boldly taking sides with the abolitionists” (Dillon 2:44). Mitchel, incensed, decided to answer the letter in *The Citizen*:

And here, now, after six years, we find Mr. Haughton as fresh as ever, saying the very same things that were then so tedious to us. Others may exert themselves to gain justice and freedom for Irish serfs; he, for his part, will stand by the negroes, and scathe the cradle-plunderers. . . . Now let us satisfy our pertinacious friend, if possible, by a little plain English. We are not abolitionists; no more abolitionists than Moses, or Socrates, or Jesus Christ. We deny that it is a crime, or a wrong, or even a peccadillo, to hold slaves, to buy slaves, to keep slaves to their work by flogging or other needful coercion. “By your silence,” says Mr. Haughton, “You will become a participator in their wrongs.” But we will not be silent, when occasion calls for speech; and as for being a participator in their wrongs, we, for our part, wish we had a good plantation, well-stocked with healthy negroes, in Alabama. There, now! Is Mr. Haughton content? What right has he to call upon Mr. Mitchel the moment he sets his foot in America to begin a crusade for a cause which, as Mr. Haughton knows, was always distasteful to him in Ireland?<sup>11</sup>

Mitchel’s biographer William Dillon says that Mitchel was not aware of the strength of antislavery sentiment when he made this statement and was taken aback when he was castigated by the New York press afterwards. Horace

Greeley's *Tribune* lashed out at Mitchel, as did Henry Ward Beecher in his *Independent*. The scandal dominated discussion at the Annual Meeting of the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society, held in Boston that January. Over the next few months, John Mitchel was denounced by every lecturer who spoke at the New York Anti-Slavery Society's lecture series—with the exception of Ralph Waldo Emerson.<sup>12</sup> John Mitchel certainly would have been known to Henry David Thoreau in 1854.

Steven R. Knowlton notes that Mitchel's admirers considered him "a gifted writer, probably the best of his generation [in Ireland]. His detractors invariably point out that he supported slavery in America. Beyond that, Mitchel, who in his time was probably Ireland's most popular hero after Daniel O'Connell, has largely slipped into obscurity" (38). Mitchel's defense of slavery and subsequent support of the Confederacy no doubt accounts for this obscurity. It is impossible to say exactly why Mitchel defended slavery so vehemently. But one consistent view expressed throughout Mitchel's career is his unflagging hatred of England, and in one of his letters to Beecher, published in *The Citizen* on 11 February 1854, he expresses his belief that abolitionism is an English export, which "has on it the slime and trail of Exeter Hall."<sup>13</sup> Another explanation, perhaps, is that through his support of slavery, Mitchel further distanced himself from what he perceived to be the weaknesses of Daniel O'Connell, whose appeal to Irish-Americans to support the antislavery movement in America endeared the elder statesman to American Abolitionists. And William Dillon explains Mitchel's views toward slavery thus:

From the time of this controversy forward there is an element of ferocity in his advocacy of slavery and denunciation of abolition. I believe we may trace the origin of this ferocity in that hatred of cant and hypocrisy which was the ruling passion of his nature. He saw, or fancied he saw, a large element of cant in the abolition movement, as represented by Mr. Beecher; and the least suspicion of cant was always enough to set him up in arms. (2:46)

Given the initial popularity of the newspaper among Irish-Americans, as well as the sensational and heated debate that erupted between Beecher and Mitchel in its pages, *The Citizen* might have enjoyed a longer and more prosperous life among New York's newspapers. Despite many of his subscribers' vehement protests that he did not speak for the Irish community, Mitchel's stand on slavery did little to affect the circulation of the paper, supporting the notion that many others in the Irish community either did not support abolitionism or were apathetic toward it. Ultimately, though, Thoreau's belief that his friend's "contempt [would] have been more fatally expressed, if he had not bought" *The Citizen*

proved true, for when Mitchel dared to criticize New York's Catholic hierarchy, the paper was doomed. In the fall of 1854, as the controversy over his defense of slavery subsided, Mitchel expressed his opposition to the Pope's restoration to power, saying that the Romans had as much right to change their form of government as any. The Archbishop of the Roman Catholic Church of New York, John Hughes,<sup>14</sup> wrote to take issue with Mitchel, and the vitriol that erupted on the pages of *The Citizen* all but sealed its fate. By then, Mitchel had had enough of New York anyway, and in the spring of 1855 he moved his family to Tennessee to try his hand at farming.<sup>15</sup> Mitchel was not successful as a farmer, however, and in 1857 he started a new newspaper, the *Southern Citizen*, which he continued for two years. During the war, he edited the *Richmond Enquirer* in the interests of the South and lost two sons fighting for the Confederacy.

In moving south, Mitchel left behind a North he had come to equate with the British culture he despised. Nevertheless, in the summer of 1865 Mitchel returned to New York by invitation to edit the *Daily News*, a paper staunchly southern in orientation, and began writing what he called "the truth concerning the southern cause" (Dillon 2:215). After being warned to cease publication by the military authorities in New York, Mitchel was arrested and imprisoned at Fortress Monroe, where Jefferson Davis was being held. Mitchel later wrote,

I suppose that I am the only person who has ever been a prisoner-of-state to the British and American Government one after the other. . . . And these two governments, we are told, are the very highest expression and grandest hope of the civilization of the nineteenth century. Here is the very point, I suspect. I despise the civilization of the nineteenth century, and its two highest expressions and grandest hopes, most especially—so the said century sees nothing that can be done with me, except to tie me up. (Dillon 2:218)

After a brief time in prison, Mitchel once again started a newspaper, this time entitled, not surprisingly, the *Irish Citizen*. Although it was not as successful as his previous ventures, it had a respectable readership, until he once again offended many of his readers by opposing the Fenian organization.<sup>16</sup>

Near the end of his life, Mitchel returned to Ireland, where he was elected to the House of Commons but was declared ineligible as a convicted felon. In the re-election, Mitchel once again beat out the Conservative candidate by a majority of more than 4 to 1. He died 20 March 1875, near Newry, Ireland. His obituary in the *New York Times* summed up his public career as "a complete failure, his advocacy of negro slavery and his subsequent support of the Southern Confederacy having killed him in a political sense." However, the *Times* also

pointed out that “the news of the death of John Mitchel was received yesterday with much regret by the Irish residents in this City. Although many of them differed from Mr. Mitchel in many respects, they admired his unwavering fidelity to ‘fatherland,’ and were ready to forgive in him faults which would not be readily pardoned if committed by another.”<sup>17</sup>

The controversy that Mitchel had ignited with his inflammatory letter to James Haughton in early 1854 placed Mitchel in the center of the antislavery movement and gave to many speakers a figure and name through which the ideology of slavery advocacy in the abstract could be personified. A few days after Mitchel’s reply to Haughton appeared, Henry Ward Beecher lectured at his Tabernacle, which, according to *The New-York Daily Tribune*, “was crowded to its utmost capacity.” Beecher mentions Mitchel near the beginning, and he read the incendiary letter from *The Citizen*. The *Daily Tribune* reported that “the extract elicited a tempest of hisses and cries of shame.” Beecher then stated, “Fellow citizens, it is a wise maxim to say nothing about the dead, unless you can speak well of them. [Great applause].”<sup>18</sup>

The next day, 19 January, in his newspaper *The Independent*, Beecher wrote an article entitled “John Mitchel and Slavery,” in which he stated that “It is plain, from the opinion now expressed by Mr. Mitchel, that he waged his warfare with England, without any real principle of liberty at bottom. . . . That resounding voice that awoke the sympathy of the world for freedom, now sends terror through the cotton field; or vociferates triumphant bids for comely girls and healthy boys of divided families, among squabbling Legrees,<sup>19</sup> around the auction-block.”

On 21 January, Mitchel set the tone for the exchange, responding in *The Citizen* to Beecher’s lecture: “For this week we say nothing about it. We are receiving all the ‘eleven points’ of our assailants in our buckler, thus. But next week, we give his reverence warning that we mean not only to parry but to thrust.” But before Mitchel could launch his counter-attack, the next Tabernacle lecture was delivered by Lucy Stone.<sup>20</sup> In her speech, as reported by the *Daily Tribune*, Stone stated: “Let me say to John Mitchel that there is no class of people in this broad Continent from whom the base utterances he made will dump on him more contempt than from the slaveholders themselves! [Great and prolonged applause.]”<sup>21</sup> At the same time, at the Twenty-second Annual Meeting of the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society, a resolution was adopted by William Lloyd Garrison stating that “John Mitchel has revealed himself to be a braggart patriot, and a thoroughly unprincipled man, utterly recreant to all his professions of liberty,” and after which the floor was taken by a host of men, many of them of Irish descent, denouncing Mitchel in similar terms. Wendell Phillips took the floor, and said he

had been asked to say something about John Mitchel. But he looked carefully about, and he couldn't see that anything was left of him. He must say that John Mitchel gave, in his own case, the strongest proof that had ever come to his knowledge, of British tyranny; for it had utterly crushed the life out of one whom it had recognized as worthy of persecution, and had sent him to us, the poorest and meanest Slave he had ever heard of. (Great applause).<sup>22</sup>

On 27 January, *The New-York Daily Tribune* published an article, most likely penned by Horace Greeley, in which Mitchel is described as having "severed himself from every advocate of Irish emancipation in this country, whose sympathy is in the least degree vital, or at all worth having. . . . Those into whose hands he has cast himself, and among whom he has chosen to take up his abode, he will find frigidly conservative. He has gone from the living to dwell among the dead. His own soul will be chilled with the corpse-like contact he will everywhere experience."

Mitchel only exacerbated his problems, confronting his detractors in his newspaper at every opportunity. With Stone he was more courteous, confessing that he was "much pleased" with her performance. "Having never heard a woman speak in public before," he was surprised to find himself "listening with respectful attention, for more than an hour, to a very intelligent and unaffected young lady." He went on to say that

the lecturer did not forget to call forth the ready hisses of her audience by an allusion to the unfortunate, but now deceased, John Mitchel. Our reporter observed that individual himself, or else his ghost, in the gallery, and did not envy him his sensations. After the atmosphere of applause he breathed but a few days ago, there must have been a strange revulsion of feeling when he came into a public assembly and found his name received with execration. But perhaps he tried it for the good of his health, as a Russian after a hot bath goes out and rolls himself in the snow.<sup>23</sup>

Mitchel also responded to the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society's resolution, simply noting that, "if Garrison denounced us as a 'braggart patriot,' we denounce him as [an] ass. So we are even."<sup>24</sup> But it would be Beecher for whom Mitchel saved his most scathing rhetoric. In a long letter addressed to Beecher in the 28 January issue of *The Citizen*, Mitchel wrote:

Reverend Sir:—You will be surprised to see a letter addressed to you by one whom you supposed to be dead. In your Anti-Slavery Lecture, as reported in the *Tribune*, I find that you announced my decease to a large congregation; and, with Christian meekness, repressed the loud hisses of your hearers in consideration of the respect due the deceased. This morning I have read my own epitaph in the *Tribune*, and even an account of the coroner's inquest—which must have greatly affected my friends, if I have any left.

Mitchel goes on to defend his beliefs regarding slavery, basing most of his arguments upon biblical passages—a long-standing convention among slavery advocates. He ends the letter noting:

Now your reverence is a slave: a slave to certain words and phrases, which have got the mastery over your poor mind, and thus on your body too. You are as one possessed by them. They make you cry out, and gesticulate violently, and toil and sweat and revile passers-by. Who will emancipate you, unhappy congregational pastor! . . . Spare me therefore your righteous indignation:—as I am so far behind the age do not try to drag me on—I can never keep up with you. Your reverence indeed will soon be clear out of sight; and I wish you a good journey. Adieu.

Beecher responded to Mitchel in *The Independent* on 2 February 1854. “That you select *me* from among all who reprobated your apostasy from the gospel of human liberty, arises, I presume, from reasons of convenience to yourself rather than of compliment to me,” Beecher stated. He continues:

I am a clergyman; and it might seem to the unwary a very natural thing to address such an one an argument upon *Hebrew* slavery. It is doubtless more agreeable for you to stumble over the records of rude society four thousand years ago, and to talk about Moses and the patriarchs, than to ponder what John Mitchel—the Irish patriot—said but the other day about *American* slavery. I shall not suffer that new issue to be made.

Beecher goes on to hold Mitchel to the issue at hand:

The question between you and the public is not whether Hebrew slavery was right. Nor whether Roman slavery was right. Nor

even whether American slavery is right. The question is simply this: Can John Mitchel be an American slaveholder without apostasy from the grounds which he took against the English government? . . . Please let Moses sleep; and come back from your retreat behind the dust of 4000 years.

Mitchel responded to Beecher again, in the 11 February issue of *The Citizen*, although he never does take up the particular question Beecher put to him. Instead, Mitchel points out to Beecher:

You have a dislike to Moses, at which I do not wonder. You say "let Moses sleep." Then why did you cite that legislator in you[r] Lecture? It was your reverence that awakened him. . . . I followed you into the Pentateuch, and showed that you did not read those five books aright. . . . So Moses has become tedious to you. You beg me not to keep "stumbling over the records of rude society four thousand years ago."—But pardon me, it was your reverence who stumbled; and you are not sufficiently grateful to me for picking you up.

At the end of the letter Mitchel announces his desire to leave the subject:

You belong to a sect and a school of social reformers that I have always kept at arm's length. . . . Cant, indeed, is strong, and the star of Humbug is high and culminant; but at any rate a man is not obliged to make himself at home with humbug, to fling himself into the arms of humbug, and contentedly take up house with humbug. I will never say unto Barnum,<sup>25</sup> thou art my brother, and unto Bunkum,<sup>26</sup> thou art my sister and mother. Neither will I say unto Beecher, thou art my pastor and master.

This ended the exchanges between Mitchel and Beecher, but lecturers continued to use Mitchel as a convenient target in their speeches, and Mitchel continued to attend the lectures to report on them. Furthermore, while Beecher now let him alone, Mitchel admitted that "with public opinion in America the Editor of the 'Citizen' now feels himself to be quits," relating that "the immortal hero of two months ago reads now that he is *an imposter* (*Hartford Republican*)—that he is a 'suicide' (*New York Tribune*) and a 'hideous hag' (*Independent*). The *Vermont Tribune* heads an article, 'John Mitchel, the Hypocrite,' and 'half hopes he was drunk when he penned the loathsome paragraph.'"<sup>27</sup>

Yet in his own reviews of the lecture series published in *The Citizen*, it is clear that Mitchel also garnered some pleasure from the vitriol heaped upon

him and the audience reaction it produced. Indeed, Mitchel admits that “he has gone to a Tabernacle Lecture purposely to hear himself hissed, was hissed to his heart’s content, and made an entry of it on the spot to his own credit.”<sup>28</sup> Mitchel’s reviews of the Tabernacle lectures nearly all contain some reference to his name being mentioned and booed, and all are bitingly satirical in tone. William Lloyd Garrison’s lecture provides an example:

[Garrison] was very sorry that he could not allow a “late refugee from Van Dieman’s land to own and flog a plantation full of negroes among them.” Great and merry applause, mingled with the music from Herr Driesbach’s Menagerie opposite, followed this. Altogether we were glad to hear that Mr. Garrison had been ill, for he needed some excuse, his discourse, though written, was common-place, considerable fallacious, tedious, and full of peculiar semi-theological cant which with a monotonous mode of speaking made it rather drowsy.<sup>29</sup>

Even into March, Mitchel provided the speakers at the antislavery series a convenient rhetorical device sure to elicit a fervent response, and speakers continued to denounce him, although in some cases less acrimoniously than in others. Reviewing Wendell Phillips’ lecture, Mitchel noted that Phillips said:

A great man came here the other day—a fugitive from the bondage of another land. He came from Australia; where he was exiled for liberty. When a great man comes from another country he searches out the idea characteristic of the country, in order to compliment it. John Mitchel found this in Slavery.<sup>30</sup>

He also reported on Theodore Parker’s lecture, noting that Parker claimed:

But I cannot think that John Mitchel is a fair representative of the Irish sentiment. (Hisses and loud applause.) The priest misleads the Irish people. The priest is misled by his theocracy. . . . But the next generation of the Irish . . . will take the priests’ thumbs from their ears, their fingers from their eyes, and remove the iron thread from their lips, and Irishmen will then be the negroes’ friend—the friend of freedom. (Loud applause.) John Mitchel will go under: O’Connell and other great men will come up.<sup>31</sup>

In the 11 March issue of *The Citizen*, Mitchel reported that

The concluding lecture of the Anti-Slavery course was delivered on Tuesday evening,<sup>32</sup> by no less a person than Ralph Waldo Emerson. There was considerable curiosity to hear how this practiced elaborator of exquisite sentences would set about composing such sentences as should fit the taste of the Tabernacle. We had certainly formed no high estimate of Mr. Emerson as a thinker, that is to say a coherent reasoner; yet we did expect that he would give us *either* fancy or logic, either poetry or vigor, either rhyme or reason. We declare that we were disappointed in this reasonable alternative anticipation . . . . We went to hear something Emersonian, almost rising to be at times Carlylean; we heard a tame repetition of Parker and Phillips, nay, a dilution of Beecher and a *rechauffee*<sup>33</sup> of Miss Lucy. In studying to be plain he became flat, and closed the course with so dull a performance that one is glad the lecture season is over. Two things, indeed, the Lecturer forbore to do. He did not anathematize the American Union: he did not abuse the unfortunate wight, John Mitchel. So much the worse: his lecture was the less piquant.<sup>34</sup>

Although the controversy subsided somewhat by the spring, Mitchel remained a hostile critic of the antislavery movement and its members, and he condemned the actions of Abolitionists during the Anthony Burns crisis—the case that prompted Thoreau to write “Slavery in Massachusetts.”<sup>35</sup> Even into the summer Mitchel remained the subject of much controversy, being mentioned in *The Liberator* on 21 July, 4 August, and 11 August. He was also mentioned by William Wells Brown in a speech he delivered in October.<sup>36</sup> There is no doubt that many Abolitionists and antislavery sympathizers would have continued to buy and read Mitchel’s *Citizen* throughout 1854, if only to be assured of their own outrage.

It was for this reason that Thoreau mentioned Mitchel and his paper by name when on July Fourth of that year he delivered his speech at Framingham. But Thoreau did so with a very different purpose in mind. Enough speakers had used the rostrum to condemn slavery, and enough had denounced Mitchel. Thoreau wished to say something about what a citizen in Massachusetts could actually *do*. Thoreau mentions Mitchel, then, not as a straw man that he can be assured will draw down censure from his audience, as other speakers had done throughout that spring, including many who shared the podium with him that day,<sup>37</sup> but to draw his audience’s attention to its own complicity in the slavery system. As speaker after speaker mentioned the injustice of the Fugitive Slave

Law and the Kansas-Nebraska Act, Thoreau admonished his audience: "What should concern Massachusetts is not the Nebraska Bill, nor the Fugitive Slave Bill, but her own slaveholding and servility. Let the State dissolve her union with the slaveholder. . . . Let each inhabitant of the State dissolve his union with her, as long as she delays to do her duty" (104).

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## Notes

- 1 Henry David Thoreau, *Reform Papers*, ed. Wendell Glick. *The Writings of Henry D. Thoreau*, ed. Elizabeth Hall Witherell, et al. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), p. 101. Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text. Thoreau's claim regarding his newspaper reading may have been more rhetorical than substantive. Recent scholarship reveals that Thoreau read newspapers avidly. See, for example, David G. Fuller, "Correcting the Newspapers: Thoreau and 'A Plea for Captain John Brown,'" *The Concord Saunterer* n.s., 5 (1997): 165-75.
- 2 Since no holograph copy and no printer's copy of the address have been preserved, it is impossible to determine whether this first spelling is Thoreau's or a printer's error. In the same issue of *The Liberator*, however, is a letter discussing Mitchel, in which his name is spelled correctly, and it thus seems more likely that the typesetter was following Thoreau's copy rather than imposing his own spelling.
- 3 See below the resolution adopted by Garrison denouncing Mitchel at the 1854 Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society meeting.
- 4 Barry Sloan, "The Autobiographies of John Mitchel and Charles Gavin Duffy: A Study in Contrasts." *Eire-Ireland*, 22, no. 2 (1987): 29.
- 5 Daniel O'Connell (1775-1847), known as the "Liberator," and perhaps the greatest figure in nineteenth-century Irish history, won emancipation for Ireland's Catholics in 1829. During the 1830s and early 1840s O'Connell advocated repeal of the act of union through peaceful means.
- 6 O'Brien (1803-1864) was released by British authorities in 1854 and pardoned two years later. He returned to Ireland where he took little part in politics. Thomas Francis Meagher (1823-1867), after escaping to the United States, co-founded *The Citizen* with Mitchel, though he took little part in it. During the Civil War Meagher organized the Irish Brigade and became a brigadier-general in the Union Army. After the war he was appointed temporary governor of the Montana territory, where he died in a drowning accident on the Missouri River.
- 7 Quoted in William Dillon, *Life of John Mitchel*, 2 vols., (London: Kegan Paul, Trench & Co. 1888), 1:38.

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- 8 Steven R. Knowlton, "The Politics of John Mitchel: a Reappraisal." *Eire-Ireland*, 22, no. 2 (1987): 38.
- 9 As comparisons, the *Philadelphia Public Ledger* claimed a circulation of 44,000 in 1850; the *New York Signal* nearly 19,000 in weekly sales; and the *Sunday Herald* a circulation of 10,000 copies by 1860. William E. Huntzicker, *The Popular Press, 1833-1865*, vol. 3, *The History of American Journalism*, ed. James D Startt and William David Sloan (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1999): 13-31.
- 10 *The Citizen*, 14 January 1854, p. 4.
- 11 *The Citizen*, 14 January 1854, p.1.
- 12 It is unclear whether Emerson deliberately chose not to mention the controversy, or whether he was simply unaware of it. He does not mention Mitchel or his newspaper anywhere in his journals, notebooks, or letters.
- 13 Exeter Hall, a large public meeting hall in London, where, among other events, a large antislavery rally was held in 1841.
- 14 John Joseph Hughes (1797-1864) was born in Ireland, but his family emigrated to Pennsylvania in 1817. Despite an irregular education, he rose from priest to be named bishop of New York in 1842. According to the *Dictionary of American Biography*, Hughes "fought the radical press established in New York by exiles like Thomas Darcy McGee of the *Nation* and John Mitchell [*sic*] of the *Citizen*." See *DAB*, vol. 5, ed. Dumas Malone, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1933), pp. 352-55.
- 15 During the controversy of 1854, Mitchel received invitations to speak throughout the South, and even received a special commendation from the Louisiana state legislature. While Mitchel wrote that he "desired to fly from the turmoil of New York, and to try whether life might be possible for us amongst the woods," he also clearly wished to move to a community more sympathetic to his views. See Dillon, 2:61-64.
- 16 An Irish independence organization, with membership both in Ireland and the United States.
- 17 *New York Times*, 21 March 1875, p. 2.
- 18 *The New-York Daily Tribune*, 18 January 1854, p. 1. Brackets in original.
- 19 From the character Simon Legree, a Southern slave owner in Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Stowe (1811-1896) was Beecher's sister.
- 20 Lucy Stone (1818-1893), abolitionist speaker, reformer, and pioneer in the woman's rights movement. Stone graduated from Oberlin College in 1847, and soon began to lecture regularly for abolition. Along with Susan B. Anthony, Stone was a paid agent of the American Anti-Slavery Society in the 1850s. An active reformer throughout her life, she delivered her last lecture on woman's rights in 1893 at the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago. See Lewis Perry and Michael Fellman, *Antisla-*

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*very Reconsidered, New Perspectives on the Abolitionists*, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana University Press, 1979): 250.

- 21 *The New-York Daily Tribune*, 25 January 1854, p. 2. Brackets in original.
- 22 *Proceedings of the Twenty-Second Annual Meeting of the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society*, 1854. (1856; reprint, 24 vols. in 3, Westport, Conn.: Negro Universities Press, 1970), 3:10.
- 23 *The Citizen*, 28 January 1854, p. 1.
- 24 *The Citizen*, 4 February 1854, p. 1.
- 25 Phineas Taylor Barnum (1810-1891), best known today for the traveling circus he helped establish in 1870, would have been known to Mitchel and his audience for his role as promoter of Charles Stratton, "General Tom Thumb, The Smallest Man Alive," as well as his "American Museum," which he established in New York in 1844, and where he earned his fortune exhibiting such "curiosities" as "The Feejee Mermaid."
- 26 From Buncombe County, N.C., referring to a remark made by its representative, who defended an irrelevant 1845 speech in Congress by explaining that he was "speaking to Buncombe."
- 27 *The Citizen*, 18 February 1854, p. 1. Parenthetical citations in original.
- 28 *The Citizen*, 18 February 1854, p. 2.
- 29 *The Citizen*, 14 February 1854, p. 2.
- 30 *The Citizen*, 1 March 1854, p. 3.
- 31 *The Citizen*, 4 March 1854, p.2.
- 32 Emerson's speech on the Fugitive Slave Law was delivered on 7 March.
- 33 Re-heated; warmed over (French).
- 34 Mitchel's description of Emerson's speech was reprinted in the *National Anti-Slavery Standard* (18 March 1854); but the *Liberator* (17 March 1854) reprinted a review from the *Boston Transcript*, which claimed that "in the hands of the master, the old theme wears a new beauty when clothed with the graces of his thought." See *Emerson's Anti-Slavery Writings*, ed. Len Gougeon and Joel Myerson. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), p. 214n.
- 35 Burns, an escaped slave, was captured and held in Boston by local authorities to be turned over to his Virginia owner in accordance with the Fugitive Slave Law.
- 36 Brown (ca. 1814-1884), was born in Lexington, Kentucky. He escaped from slavery in January 1834. From 1834 on he worked actively in the Abolitionist movement and was hired in 1847 by the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society as a lecturer. In a speech at West Chester, Pennsylvania, 23 October 1854, Brown said, "You welcome the fugitive from European oppression, and, after shaking hands with him and congratulating him on his escape, you turn to catch the fugitive from American oppression and return him to his chains. And when you could find no better man to

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welcome, you welcomed John Mitchel, who is ready to join in the chase with you." Qtd. in *The United States*, vol. 4 of *The Black Abolitionist Papers*, ed. C. Peter Ripley, et al., (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1985), p. 250.

- 37 According to the *Boston Commonwealth* (5 July 1854), speakers at the Framingham rally included "Mr. [William Lloyd] Garrison . . . Wendell Phillips, . . . Lucy Stone, . . . and others." Rptd. in *Thoreau Research Newsletter* 1, no. 3 (1990): 12.



**Ralph Waldo Emerson**

Crayon drawing by Samuel Worcester Rowse.

*Photograph courtesy of the Concord Free Public Library.*

# EMERSON AND NATURAL EVIL

David Lyttle

When he was nineteen years old, Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote: "No elaborate argument can remove . . . the first & chief difficulty in the way of the belief of an omnipresent Good Principle, namely, the existence of evil in the world, and next, the great share it has in the texture of human life."<sup>1</sup> In this essay I attempt to establish the philosophic context in which Emerson struggled with the problem of natural evil. First, I trace the major role that the death of Ellen, Emerson's young wife, played in leading him to reject the notion that "God" is "a person," to accept the idea that the soul in its solitude is fundamental reality, and to believe, paradoxically, at the same time in the *transcendental* identity of all individuals. Second, I discuss Emerson's serious considerations, in the late thirties and early forties, that "God" and man are not two distinct conscious entities but are two aspects of Being, "God," the unconscious dynamic of Being, and man, the consciousness of Being. Third, I consider the role that the death of his son, Waldo, played in his subsequent dark speculations about "God," and "the nature of things" in general.<sup>2</sup> Fourth, I suggest that Emerson's inability to explain the mystery of evil in the context of his philosophic monism led to the hardening of his cosmic faith that ultimately all is for the good.

I assume throughout this essay that Emerson, although he modified his ethical idealism as he grew older, never rejected his philosophic idealism based on his premise that the subjective "I" is the "ultimate reference point of reality," is, in truth, "God."<sup>3</sup> I do not doubt, however, that experience forced him to modify his youthful optimism in the ability of the individual to build his own world according "to the pure idea" in his mind (CW, 1:45). My strategy is simple. I trace as well as I can the somewhat erratic unfolding of his thought in his journal, his sermons, his letters, and in his essays.

In the late twenties and early thirties, Emerson gradually rejected the hypothesis that "God" is "a person," an entity separate and distinct from man. On 8 February 1831 Ellen died, and he cried out in his journal: "Reunite us, O

thou Father of our Spirits" (*JMN*, 3:227). He used William Ellery Channing's familial designation of God as "Father of Spirits" also in the first sermon he gave after her death, but rarely, if ever, used the phrase again.<sup>4</sup> In this sermon of 20 February 1831 he sought consolation for his broken heart in the idea of God as "a person." In fact, Ellen's death seems to have brought home to him a vivid sense of personal "otherness," both human and divine. He wrote his Aunt Mary Moody on the day Ellen died: "I do not know but it is true that I have never known a person in the world in whose separate existence as a soul I could so readily & fully believe & she is present with me now beaming joyfully upon me, in her deliverance & the entireness of her love for your poor nephew."<sup>5</sup> Thus at the same time Emerson was debating with himself about whether or not God is "a person," he delivered a sermon about a personal God and wrote a letter to another person about another person whose "soul" seemed to have more of a separate existence than any other person he had ever known. Unquestionably, Emerson knew intimately the exquisite relations of personal "otherness" with a human being, if not with a divine Being.

But Ellen's death, if not Ellen herself, also taught Emerson about the religious significance of solitude and self-reliance. When they married, she was tubercular, and he prepared for her early death with a sense of fatality. Two days after their marriage, on 13 March 1829, he delivered a sermon on dying:

The hour will come to yourself to die. It will come to each of us. It belongs to God's order—which we call nature as much as hunger or sleep. . . . In a few years or months or days the symptoms of that change will appear in you. The alarm will sound in the ear of your mind, that you have done with men, and men have done with you. You will be withdrawn by a weakness you cannot simulate, from the living crowd that fill the street. . . . You have retreated to your chamber to a solitude which the world cannot relieve. I say you are alone; it is true you are nursed by the cares and assured of the sympathies of your friends. . . . But alas, my brother, is that solitude less? . . . Is not he alone who sees the shades of the last night shutting down over his senses, though the whole world environed his bed, and armies of friends cry out at his side?

He continued with Puritan intonation to consider his role as a minister:

Into that solitude the man of God shall introduce a sweeter society than the merriment of health has ever made; into that darkness of this world the good pastor shall let in the light of another. . . . In that hour, at least, when trifles are neglected and ceremony is forgot, I hope to be understood and esteemed

as an effectual friend, that the tidings which I bring, that the cause in whose strength I come, will give power to my weakness. I that am your fellow in the same fate by God appointed will endeavor to quicken your faith by the same motives that sustain my own. We will talk of the Resurrection from the Dead (*The Complete Sermons*, 1:239-240).

However, Emerson's faith in "the light of another" world and in God as a separate Being diminished after Ellen died; and the tidings he later brought to his listeners were not about the resurrection from the dead or about *personal* immortality but about the power of self-reliance in this world and the transcendental identity of all individuals. That he learned these things in the dark and cold is a major reason his followers find authentic his affirmation of Being.<sup>6</sup>

In his loneliness Emerson cried out to Ellen: "Farewell blessed Spirit who hast made me happy in thy life & in thy death make me yet happy in thy disembodied state" (*JMN*, 3:227). But Ellen sent no palpable message back to him that she endured either as a "disembodied" spirit or as "a person." He continued to plead: "Dear Ellen . . . O suggest, coming from God's throne, suggest to this lone heart some hint of him" (*JMN*, 3:240). But he heard from her nothing, not a hint, not a suggestion that she or a personal God existed. He continued to grieve: "Here I sit alone from month to month filled with a deep desire to exchange thoughts with a friend who does not appear" (*JMN*, 3:272); "she never comes to me" (*JMN*, 3:285).

Then quite unexpectedly Emerson learned from his loneliness that "one of the arguments with which nature furnishes us for the Immortality of the Soul is . . . the awful solitude in which here a Soul lives" (*JMN*, 3:272). Several years later, continuing this theme, he observed: "I sit alone & cannot arouse myself to thought[.] I go & sit with my friend & in the endeavor to explain my thought to him or her, I lay bare the awful mystery to myself as never before & start at the total loneliness & infinity of one man" (*JMN*, 5:224; 1836). The "Immortality of the Soul"? The "Infinity of one man"? In 1840, he noted: "In all my lectures, I have taught one doctrine, namely, the infinitude of the private man" (*JMN*, 7:342). And so it seems that Emerson, thrust by fate into a desert of "awful" loneliness, beyond the visceral warmth of associated life, was not illuminated by a supernatural presence but instructed by silence to believe that beyond the loneliness "which the world cannot relieve" is a solitude, indeed, an "isolation," which is "metaphysical" or divine (*CW*, 3:80). The loss of Ellen taught him that to be an individual is to be alone, and that to be alone is to be, not "lost," but open to the intuition that the individual is unique and infinite "like God," that "the soul gives itself alone, original, and pure, to the Lonely, Original and Pure" (*CW*, 2:174).<sup>7</sup>

Soon after Ellen died, the young minister wrote a remarkable poem expressing his victory over loneliness and despair:

The Soul of thy soul  
 Give up to thy soul—  
 Let it have its way—  
 It is, I tell thee, God himself  
 The selfsame One that rules the Whole  
 Tho' he speaks thro' thee with a stifled voice  
 And looks thro' thee shorn of his beams,  
 . . . let thine eyes  
 Look straight before thee as befits  
 The simplicity of Power. . . .  
 Therefore o happy youth  
 Thou art unto thyself a *law*  
 And since the Soul of things is in thee  
 Thou neediest nothing out of thee  
 Neither of moral nor material  
 The law, the gospel, & the Providence,  
 Heaven, Hell, the Judgment, & the stores  
 Immeasurable of Truth & Good  
 All these thou must find  
 Within thy single mind  
 Or never find.  
 Thou are the *law* (*JMN*, 3:291-92).<sup>8</sup>

Thus Emerson concluded that he was the “ultimate reference point of reality,” that his “soul” was “God himself,” and that all reality he “must find” within his “single mind.” As is well-known, his theme of self-reliance is really that of God-reliance; or rather, since he renounced the concept of a personal God and conceived the spiritual identity of an individual and “God” as one identity, his theme of self-reliance—as it is portrayed, for example, in his famous essay of that name—is really his theme of the reliance of Being upon itself, Being consisting in the unity of the Universal, the individual, and the dream of nature.

Even so, the feeling of “God” as a personal Otherness lingered with him. In a sermon on 31 July 1831 he informed his congregation that

a trust in yourself is the height not of pride but of piety, an unwillingness to learn of any but God himself. . . . Whilst you trust in self—the *origin of self must be perceived*. The moment a man loses sight of the truth that he did not make himself,—

that he is not a cause, but a mere effect of some other Cause, . . . the moment he lets this truth go, he becomes a bundle of errors and sins" (*The Complete Sermons*, 3:202).

A few years later, however, after gaining more confidence in his theme of identity, he would name man not "a mere effect" and God "some other Cause," but would denominate them as simply two aspects of ineffable Being (hence, himself becoming, in some people's eyes, "a bundle of errors and sins").

### The Transcendental Identity of All Individuals

Ellen's departure also strengthened Emerson's growing conviction that although each person is a separate and distinct individual in space and time, all individuals are, out of space and time, the universal mind. Two weeks after her death, on 23 February 1831, he confided to himself: "there is one Spirit through many mouths. It will not do to divide or bound what is in itself infinite." "God is everywhere" (*JMN*, 3:236-38); and a month later he reaffirmed these thoughts in a sermon: "There is one spirit speaking through a myriad mouths. . . . It will not do to divide or bound what is in itself infinite. . . . There is but one source of power, that is, God" (*The Complete Sermons*, 1:240). In 1836 he refers to "the identity, radical identity of all men; the one mind which makes each the measure of all, which makes each intelligible to all" (*JMN*, 5:265, 1836). Later he stated that "the reason why the work of genius fits the wants of all ages is because that which is spontaneous is not local or individual but flows from that internal soul which is also the soul of every man" (*JMN*, 12:389). In "The Over-Soul" he refers to "that Unity . . . within which every man's particular being is contained and made one with all other; that common heart" (*CW*, 2:160).<sup>9</sup>

In sum, Ellen's death revealed to Emerson 1) that the individual is unique and alone in time and space; and that 2) each individual is also, paradoxically, the universal mind; and that, in addition, this transcendental identity of all individuals is the source of the ability of each individual to sympathize and love others and to be truly self-reliant. Her silent message from the grave was that she and he and all others were One in Over-Soul, that they possessed (in terms of Emerson's own metaphor) One Heart that cradled in its infinitude the preciousness of all individual forms. Emerson assumed this identity near the beginning of *Nature* (1836) where he informs us that "to go into solitude, a man needs to retire as much from his chamber as from society. I am not solitary whilst I read and write, though nobody is with me. But if a man would be alone, let him look at the stars" (*CW*, 1:8). One may imagine him in his study in the evening, putting down his pen and paper, entering his garden, and walking there *not with* God but *as* God, or as a god, and interpreting the darkening sky with its shining stars to be a symbol of transcendental subjectivity of which all finite beings are points of consciousness.

The death of Ellen was for Emerson the beginning of the end of his belief in a personal god, and brought into question for him the credibility of the ultimate reality of the objective world. After Ellen, he knew the material world of bounded forms and entities and their relationships as a world of appearance only, a world in which there are no final answers, a world in which people in death know only what "sleeping Rocks Dream of" (in the poetic words of Jonathan Edwards, the great Puritan mystic, in his essay "Of Being"). After Ellen, Emerson held that final answers lay only "within," are intuitive or subjective, that subjectivity is the "private" man's "infinite," and that this infinity is the eternal, universal mind of all individuals.

### Deity may be Unconscious

Late in 1832 Emerson decided that the ministry was "antiquated" (*JMN*, 4:27), resigned his pastorate, and traveled abroad, meeting Thomas Carlyle and other great Romantics whose writings he admired. He returned to America the following year and continued his struggle to clarify his definition of "God." In 1834 he affirmed with pride his "commission to be coeval with the antiquity of the eldest causes," referred to the "All Perceiving Mind," but concluded that "I will trust my instincts" (*JMN*, 4:283, 285, 292). In this year also he began to associate the term "unconscious" with the term "God." "Blessed is the child; the Unconscious is ever the act of God himself" (*JMN*, 4:309-10). "What is the doctrine of *infallible guidance* . . . but striving to act unconsciously, to resume the simplicity of childhood" (*JMN*, 4:318). He thought that "the age of puberty . . . is the passage from the Unconscious to the Conscious, . . . from peaceful maternal Reason to hard short-sighted Understanding; from Unity to disunion" (*JMN*, 4:348). In general he meant in these quotations by the term "unconscious" unselfconsciousness or spontaneity, the opposite of self-reflective rational thought and was referring to the Romantic theme that one should live innocently in "instinctive" harmony with God's creation or "the nature of things," as supposedly do plants and animals and very young children. His use of the term in this way, however, foreshadowed his speculations that deity is "unconscious" in the sense that deity is not conscious at all.

Journal entries between 1835 and 1840 reveal his increasing frustration in defining the term "God": "He [God] is, for I am. Say rather, He is. But in the depth inaccessible of his being he refuses to be defined or personified" (*JMN*, 5:77). "God is impersonal. . . the Universe is his work" (*JMN*, 5:112). And yet, "the world was made by a mind like ours" (*JMN*, 5:168). "And what is God?" he continued: "We cannot say but we see clearly enough. . . he is the unspeakable, the immeasurable, the perfect—but we see plain enough in what direction it lies. . . there [is] no bar or wall in the Soul where man the effect

ceases & God the cause begins" (*JMN*, 5:229-30). "Is God a Person? No. That is a contradiction: the *personality* of God. A person is finite personality, is finiteness" (*JMN*, 5:282). By this time he used with ease the neutral pronoun "it" to refer to God, and in addition conceived God and man to be two aspects of one continuum of Being, not a distinct cause and a distinct effect.

By the summer of 1836, he had formulated the memorable theme that God creates nature through the individual: "The self of self creates the world through you, & organizations like you. The Universal Central Soul comes to the surface in my body" (*JMN*, 5:187).<sup>10</sup> In 1837 he confirmed his motif of identity, noting that "a certain wandering light comes to me which I instantly perceive to be the Cause of Causes. It transcends all proving. It is itself the ground of being; and I see that it is not one & I another, but this is the life of my life. That is one fact, then; that in certain moments I have known that I existed directly from God, and am, as it were, his organ. And in my ultimate consciousness [mind] Am He" (*JMN*, 5:337).

In 1838 he delivered his famous "Divinity School Address" in which he referred to God as "impersonal," as universal laws of "love, justice, temperance" or "laws of the soul . . . [that] execute themselves, [and] are out of time, out of space, and not subject to circumstance" (*CW*, 1:79, 77). He announced that "historical Christianity . . . dwells, with noxious exaggeration about the person of Jesus," and said sternly that "the soul knows no persons" (*CW*, 1:82).<sup>11</sup> In that same year he made the following complex and apparently contradictory statements in his journal: "Consciousness is God. . . I deny Personality to God because it is too little not too much. Life, personal life is faint & cold to the energy of God." "How little we know of God. . . Yourself which is the self of all. . . I proceed from God" (*JMN*, 5: 467-68, 498-99). He now envisioned God to be "conscious" but without "personality," that he and God are "the self of all" but that nevertheless he "proceeds" from God.

In his journal he repeatedly went over the logical implications of combining his theme of the identity of God and man with the idea that God is unconscious. Since he himself was conscious, he could not conceive of an identity of God and man when he held that God is also conscious. Would not the fact that each was conscious mean that each was a distinct and separate entity? Furthermore, he had committed himself to the idea that God is impersonal. Since he evidently meant by this that God is not a finite entity, not an individual, he could not have held also that God is conscious, for only individuals are conscious; consciousness is not a general or universal state of being, like stone, water, and color.<sup>12</sup> At any rate, the idea that deity might be unconscious, although running strongly against his religious heritage of theism (as did the idea that God is impersonal) became a considered option for him.

In fact, Emerson probably began to consider in depth the notion that God is unconscious during his first journey abroad, especially when he met

Thomas Carlyle who “claimed absolute sovereignty of the unconscious.”<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, many statements in Emerson’s early sermons and essays could have easily accommodated such a conceptual shift.<sup>14</sup> For examples: In “The Over-Soul” he informs us that “man is a stream whose source is hidden” (*CW*, 2:159); that God is “impersonal”; that the “private will” is overpowered by “unconscious power.” His metaphor of subjective idealism in *Nature* can be adapted to the idea that the source of creation is located in the unconscious: The divine spirit “does not act upon us from without, that is, in space and time, but spiritually, or through ourselves.” However, just a few sentences later in *Nature*, he wrote that nature is “a projection of God in the unconscious,” that it is “a present expositor of the divine mind” (*CW*, 1:38-39), statements which do not necessarily conflict with each other but which certainly indicate the indecisive complexity of his meditations on the theme of identity of God and man, and on what he called the “double consciousness” (see note 18).

In the same year that he delivered his “Divinity School Address,” Emerson noted in his journal that “to represent him [God] as an individual is to shut him out of my consciousness” (*JMN*, 5:457). Precisely so. He wanted to conceive “God” to be in himself, or rather, himself to be in God; or rather, he wanted to conceive “God” (the Universal) and himself (an individual) to be one Being. And he gradually came to realize that the only way to conceive of such an identity is to conceive God and himself to be, *not* two conscious exclusive entities, but God to be the unconscious (“hidden”) dynamic of Being and he, himself, the consciousness of Being (and “nature,” the dramatic dream of Being).

Along these lines he attempted, also in 1838, to correlate the idea that God is unconscious with the idea of “process”: “In strict speech it seems fittest to say, I Become rather than I am. I am a Becoming. So do I less sever or divide the One” (*JMN*, 5:468). This statement gives the impression that he was considering that all parts of the triadic scenario—God, man, and nature—are in process. Moreover, his growing concern with the modern theory of evolution went hand in hand with his increasing references to the unconscious. The philosopher Lancelot Law Whyte writes that in the nineteenth-century “the development of evolutionary ideas . . . coincided closely with the progressive recognition of unconscious mental processes.” For Schelling, “unconscious nature is potential mind, intelligence in course of development. . . . Consciousness is a secondary phenomenon due to the conflict of subject and object. A single unconscious formative energy underlies everything and displays a movement toward consciousness.”<sup>15</sup> Although Emerson wrote at this time: “Do not teach me out of Leibniz or Schelling, & I shall find it all myself” (*JMN*, 7:13), he was certainly working with themes of German philosophy when he was attempting to integrate into his philosophic idealism the ideas of God, of the unconscious, and of the theory of evolution.

By the early forties the hypothesis that God is not conscious seems to have become a sustained option for him. In his lecture, "Doctrine of the Soul" (1840), he stated that "the whole tendency of our time is in the submission it enjoins to the Unconscious and Infinite".<sup>16</sup> His theistic critics had attacked his idea that deity is impersonal; now they seem to have been thoroughly alarmed by his theory that deity is also unconscious. In response, he wrote:

The objector replies that to represent the Divine Being as an unconscious somewhat, is abhorrent. . . . But the unconsciousness we speak of was merely relative to us; we speak, we act from we know not what higher principle, and we describe its circumambient quality by confessing the subjection of our perception to it. . . . But in saying this, we predicate nothing of its consciousness or unconsciousness in relation to itself. We see at once that we have no language subtle enough for distinctions in that inaccessible region. . . . We cannot say, God is self conscious, or not self-conscious" (*JMN*, 7:344; 1839-40).

By this statement he seems to have made a defensive move into mystery to pacify his critics, if not himself. For one thing, he reverted to the meaning of the term "unconscious" in his early essays: due to man's limited knowledge, man is "unconscious" of the nature of God. However he hedged even that position when he referred to "the Divine Being" with the neutral pronoun "it." If the Divine Being is an "it," it can be neither personal nor conscious. In short, the quoted passage is not helpful in determining his private opinion about the nature of God but an excellent example of how he modified his radical speculations to retain his orthodox audiences.<sup>17</sup>

Emerson's apparent position in the above passage that man is incapable of knowing whether or not God is self-conscious or even conscious may seem contrary to his identity philosophy. However, he wrote in a journal entry dated soon after this passage that "the consciousness in each is a sliding scale which identifies us at pleasure with the first cause & with the coarsest phenomena," thus indicating that he held implicitly to his identity theory of a sustained continuum of mind of God and man (*JMN*, 7:429) in spite of his misleading public stance that we cannot know, at least in conceptual terms of the Understanding, the essential nature of God.<sup>18</sup>

The critic, at this point, might understandably throw up his hands and close his inquiry into Emerson's struggle to define deity and his theory of identity. If he does, he disregards Emerson's continued and (to this critic) engaging but impossible efforts to blend into a coherent philosophy his subliminal loyalty to the personal God of his heritage, his mystical experience as a "transparent eyeball," his increasing realization that the subjective "I" is the ultimate reference

point of reality, the advances of contemporaneous scientific theories, especially that of evolution, and the theory that the spiritual ground of Being is impersonal and unconscious.

### The Death of Waldo and Dark Speculations about God

In the early forties, Emerson affirmed once more his monistic theme of identity: "There is none but God only" (*JMN*, 12:507), and asked: "Is God conscious" [?] (*JMN*, 12:496), and then jotted down: "Conscious & unconscious of God" (*JMN*, 12:523). These statements imply that he was theorizing that Being consists in the conscious individual and the unconscious Universal. Finally, despairing of defining God, he reaffirmed his identity as deity, vowing that whatever God may be, "I sit with the Cause grim or glad" (*JMN*, 12:524). He hesitated to commit himself to the proposition that God is not conscious as well as impersonal, but the direction of his meditations indicates that he now steadily considered this very likely indeed.

In 1841 he referred in his journal, we have seen, to the sliding scale of consciousness, and wrote also that the "Heart affirms I am of the Maker not of the Made" (*JMN*, 7:429). Then, in "The Method of Nature" (1841), he made an abrupt statement that seems to reveal a fundamental change in his thinking about the nature of God and man:

The fact of facts is the termination of the world in man. This appears to be the last victory of intelligence. The universal does not attract us until housed in an individual. Who heeds the waste abyss of possibility? The ocean is everywhere the same, but it has no character until seen with the shore or the ship. . . . So must we admire in man, the form of the formless, the concentration of the vast, the house of reason, the cave of memory. . . . The great Pan of old, who was clothed in a leopard skin to signify the beautiful variety of things . . . was but the representative of thee, O rich and various Man! (*CW*, 1:127).

In the phrase "the waste abyss of possibility" Emerson was surely referring to God, for the ocean was one of his major symbols for the Over-Soul. And by the term "waste" he obviously meant not only vast but formless, without character, unless "housed in the individual," the individual who is "the house of reason, the cave of memory," the terminal event so far in evolutionary development. God, the Universal, now seemed to him not even structured until it is incarnated in man. If nature needs the individual to make sense, so now does God. The

Universal is mere “possibility” of power until conscious individuals actualize it through disciplined imagination.

Also in 1841 Emerson complained about the conflict between being and becoming: “I resent this intrusion of *alterity*. That which is done, & that which does, is somehow, I know not how, part of me. The Unconscious works with the conscious” (*JMN*, 8:10). By the term “Unconscious” he must have been referring to deity, not only because he capitalized the term but because the individual is manifestly conscious. Then on 27 January 1842, just when he was equating the unconscious with deity, and deity with formlessness and “waste of possibility,” Waldo died. Emerson was “anguished” and “changed by sorrow.”<sup>19</sup> In denial he clung in memory to the child’s living presence, reminiscing over and over about Waldo playing around the house and doing his little chores. The child’s absence was everywhere. “If I go down to the bottom of the garden,” he whispered to himself, “it seems as if some one had fallen into the brook.” “The wisest knows nothing” (*JMN*, 8:165).

Later, in April in a cryptic journal entry he jotted down: “It is the will of God” (*JMN*, 8:172). The “will of God”? Did he hunger for a moment, as he had when Ellen died, for faith in a personal God?<sup>20</sup> But what now was the will of God for him but the characterless energy of the impersonal unconscious, from which no mercy or compensation could be expected, and of which the Understanding could have no understanding? On 4 February he wrote to Caroline Sturgis: “Must every experience—those that promise to be dearest & most penetrative,—only kiss my cheek like the wind & pass away? I think of Ixion & Tantalus & Kehenna. Dear Boy too precious & unique a creation to be huddled aside into the waste & prodigality of things!”<sup>21</sup> As the finite consciousness of the infinite impersonal, Emerson was left alone with his loss.

“We thrive by casualties” he observed in “Experience” (*CW*, 3:39); and exclaimed in 1859 about “the joy which will not let me sit in my chair, which brings me bolt upright to my feet, & sends me striding around my room, like a tiger in his cage, and I cannot have composure & concentration enough even to set down in English words the thought which thrills me—is not that joy a certificate of the elevation? . . . & consoles all suffering?” (*JMN*, 14:308). As he had after the deaths of Ellen and his brother Charles, he surged back in compensation for disaster by obliterating sorrow in creative work, jeering, a few months later in answer to Samson Reed’s chatter about the supernatural: “Other world, . . . there is no other world; here or nowhere is the whole fact.” “He would have devils, objective devils. [But] that pure malignity exists, is an absurd proposition. . . . All my concern is with the *subjective* truth . . . not at all with the object” (*Italics mine*). “Every consciousness repeats mine and is a sliding scale from Deity to Dust” (*JMN*, 8:182-83). “The present moment is all; the Soul is God” (*JMN*, 8:188).

Once more Emerson had his way. Waldo's death like Ellen's, like vast space, infinite time, like all intimidating objects and events, threw him back on his own resources, on the subjective "I," "the Soul [that] is God," that immense affirmative underneath appearances, that eternal reality which "is alive."<sup>22</sup> Waldo's death was the ultimate test of his philosophy of identity, a test which he passed with furious flying colors. He proved to himself once again that whatever compensations were to be had for tragedy were given to himself by himself alone, according to the laws and powers of "the nature of things." In "Compensation" he had written: "Do the thing, and you shall have the power: but they who do not the thing have not the power," and referred to "the great Night or shade, on which, as a background, the living universe paints itself forth" (*CW*, 2:67, 70).<sup>23</sup>

Even so, he found that painting a new universe on the background of "the great Night" without his son was not easy. He admitted two months after Waldo's death: "I comprehend nothing of this fact but its bitterness. Explanation I have none, consolation none that rises out of the fact itself, only diversion, only oblivion of this & pursuit of new objects" (*JMN*, 8:205). How could he, positing an impersonal unconscious deity of which he was the sensitive consciousness and rejecting all formal religious support for the mourner, have been more thrown on his own inner resources? Soon after this he wrote his stunning journal passage "I am Defeated all the time; yet to Victory I am born," a passage hardly simplistic and very sobering.<sup>24</sup> Subsequently he attacked prayer as childish, "absurd & ridiculous" (*JMN*, 8:281), thereby denying that God is a person, and, claimed that "the man, the God is awakening" (*JMN*, 8:417).

In 1843 Emerson wrote the following journal entry certainly expressive of his pessimistic outlook on nature and its origin; later, he transposed it in "Experience": "Life has no memory. That which proceeds in succession might be remembered, but that which is coexistent, or ejaculated from a deeper cause as yet far from becoming conscious, knows not its own tendency" (*JMN*, 8:350; *CW*, 3:40-41). There is no doubt that at this time he seriously contemplated the idea that the "deeper cause" is impersonal and unconscious, perhaps even blind. Stephen Whicher writes about this passage and Emerson's inclination to designate deity as unconscious:

This . . . tendency in his thought . . . responded to his readings in Oriental, particularly Buddhist, literature, perhaps also, as Gray suggests, to echoes reaching him of Schelling's Identity-philosophy. . . . The force of that influence [of Buddhism] was to cut under the lingering anthropomorphism of his deity, and the deity's too close association with the supposed benevolence

of nature, and to suggest instead an unknown, unnameable One behind appearances, a substance older and deeper than mind and matter, indifferent to all human values, the identity of all things yet identical with nothing.<sup>25</sup>

But Whicher goes too far. Emerson never made such a decisive break with his earlier thinking; he never seriously believed, as Whicher seems to imply, that the ground of Being is not identical with the individual; he never came to believe in a "One behind appearances," a One which is an Other than he. In fact, right after the above quoted passage from "Experience" he stated (did Whicher notice?) that "there is that in us which changes not, and which ranks all sensations and states of mind. The consciousness in each man is a sliding scale, which identifies him now with the First Cause, and now with the flesh of his body," a metaphor, once again, that supports his theory of identity (CW, 3:42).

In 1844 Emerson charged God with insensitivity, writing to Margaret Fuller, with harsh facetiousness:

I have had no experiences no progress to put me into better intelligence with my calamity [Waldo's death] than when it was new. . . . 'I am not satisfied.' . . . But the inarticulateness of the Supreme Power how can we insatiate hearers perceivers & thinkers ever reconcile ourselves unto? It deals all too highly with us low-levelled &- weaponed men. Does the Power labor, as men do, with the impossibility of perfect explication, that always the hurt is one of one kind & the compensation of another? My divine temple which all angels seemed to love to build & which was shattered in a night, I can never rebuild."<sup>26</sup>

However much Emerson felt that he was compensated for Waldo's death by greater creativity, it is not surprising that he was bitter about the trade-off. But given the state of his philosophy at this time, how could he have expected anything else from "the nature of things"? And would a personal God have been any more articulate? Would he or she have treated him any better? At the least, he could curse fate without fear of jealous reprisal.

In 1844-45, he placed in his journal the following disturbing and fascinating entry:

Who cares how madly the early savages fight [,] who sides with one or another: their rage is organic and has its animal sweetness. . . . Onward & onward that ever going progression. That breathless haste what god can tell us whither? Who cares for the crimes of the past, for oppressing whites or oppressed

blacks, any more than for bad dreams? These fangs & eaters & food are all in the harmony of nature: & there too is the germ forever protected, unfolding, gigantic leaf after leaf, a newer flower, a richer fruit every period. Yet its next is not to be guessed. It will only save what is worth saving & it saves not by compassion but by power. It saves men through themselves. It appoints no police to guard the lion but his teeth & claws. . . . I say to you, you must save yourself, black or white, man or woman. Other help is none (*JMN*, 9:124-25).<sup>27</sup>

The beneficent creation of Emerson's youth had withered before the law of the wild. Now he sees finite man in objective time hurled along by blind, impersonal force, an "It," which rules not by compassion but by brute force. Those who are powerful are those who survive. And who knows where the whole affair is going? This is an extremely naturalistic statement lightyears away from his beautiful passages in *Nature*, from his philosophic idealism, and from his doctrine of melioration. And one cannot help speculating about how he would have applied his theory of correspondence to the above statement. Had the implications of his theory caught up to him with vengeance? Did he ever clearly ask himself: Is *this* nature which he now envisions, *this* nature alive with "sweet" animal ferocity, red in tooth and claw, swarming with those who are powerful, haunted with the deaths of dear ones, ominous with impending war—is *this* nature the creation of a tyrannical personal deity or the product of meaningless matter unobligated to man or, most of all, is this nature the symbolic expression of the "infinite" of man?<sup>28</sup>

But this is not the whole story. The above passage in its entirety is a strange emulsion of subjective and objective metaphors, a war of cosmic perspectives expressing Emerson's turmoil. Embedded in the descriptions of vast impersonal forces moving through absolute space and time, is an organic metaphor of prehistoric dimension, suggesting centrality and projection. For what is "the germ forever protected, unfolding, gigantic leaf after leaf, a new flower, a richer fruit, every year," but an image of the center, of an immense tropical plant unfolding from its dark opaque eye, the leaves and fruits of a violent world in which men are saved only "through themselves"? This cosmic image, with its primitive animality, seems to be a power-play of Emerson's subjective idealism against the linear onrush of deterministic naturalism. This image defines the latent ferocity of centrality, and suggests the savagery and lawless dangers of the center's loneliness, the possibilities of which are always present in Emerson. For "the germ" unfolding, in this interpretation, is the subject, even Emerson himself, which powers the object with the "sweetness" of animal vitality.

Further, this passage in general recalls the ambiguous passage in "Self-Reliance": "If I am the Devil's child, I will live then from the Devil," the implications of which are that Emerson, when he felt it necessary, was not disinclined, even when he wrote that early essay, to repudiate, when necessary, values of humane morality in favor of sheer power. In fact, he says in that essay: "Power is, in nature, the essential measure of right. Nature suffers nothing to remain in her kingdoms which cannot help itself" (*CW*, 2:40). And one remembers Nietzsche's attraction to him, and his own reserved admiration for his Aunt Mary's severe Calvinism, for Napoleon, and his statement in "Experience" of his full recognition that "subjectivity" is at once the reason for our divine self-trust and our belief that we can do no wrong. Only the complex intensity of the passage expresses a change in his philosophy.

Emerson read Schelling again, and Schelling strengthened his feeling that the ground of Being is dynamic and unconscious. He then speculated that "all philosophy begins from Nox & Chaos, the Ground or Abyss which Schelling so celebrates, . . . a certain abyss of reliance & fortitude on which to fall back, when worst comes to worst" (*JMN*, 9:223).<sup>29</sup> He subsequently comments that "there must be the Abyss, Nox, & Chaos out of which all come, & they must never be far off" (*JMN*, 9:325). In his various efforts, from the thirties to the fifties, to describe the ground of Being, Emerson moved from the visionary mind in Nature, to the "lap of immense intelligence" in "Self-Reliance" (*CW*, 2:37), to "the aboriginal abyss of real Being, . . . the vast affirmative, excluding negation" in "Compensation," to the "bleak rocks" of solitude of which "God [is] the native" in "Experience" (*CW*, 3:46); to the "abyss of reliance & fortitude" on which to fall back, when worst comes to worst." Now we are told that we originate in and draw life from "Nox & Chaos."

In 1854 he made a dramatic statement that reverts to his period of despondency in 1844 (and perhaps reflects his anticipatory horror, but not his disapproval, of the impending Civil War): "The existence of evil & malignant men does not depend on themselves or on men, it indicates the virulence that still remains uncured in the universe, uncured & corrupting & hurling out these pestilent rats & tigers, and men rat-like & wolf-like. . . . The mass are animal, in a state of pupillage, & nearer the chimpanzee. We are used as brute atoms, until we think" (*JMN*, 13:298, 302). Here he speculates that evil is not the absence of good or the result of the individual will, but the consequence if not of "objective devils" then (as Whicher suggests) of the incomplete process of the ongoing evolution of "the Whole." Again he implies that the origin of rationality in the universe is primarily located in individuals who "think" rather than in the unconscious Universal.

How enduringly convinced Emerson was of the truth of the above negative "naturalistic" passages (most of which in his work are pointed out) is debatable, but obviously, he was grievously afflicted by this kind of thinking

especially during the early and mid-forties; it surely infected his affirmative philosophy. He had vowed to himself right after Waldo's death: "Stick to thy affirming, how faint & feeble so ever. A poet is an affirmer. Such loud & manifold denial as certain chemists, astronomers, & geologists make imposes on me" (*JMN*, 8:174). And he had written a little earlier in "The Poet": "For the world is not painted or adorned, but is from the beginning beautiful; and God has not made some beautiful things, but Beauty is the creator of the universe" (*CW*, 3:5); that is, beauty is not superimposed on nature by the sense perceptions of man, nor does the beauty in nature herald supernatural beauty; rather, beauty is the very essence of Being here and now. And yet when one reads Emerson's disillusioned journal entries and other prose passages quoted in this essay, he sharply realizes how serious was Emerson's struggle with the negative. "The Poet," like other set pieces written during these years, seems in some ways a strategic *tour de force*, like a transcendental mush dished out to expectant audiences.<sup>30</sup>

Jonathan Bishop observes that the Emerson of middle age "becomes the preacher of a myth about the Soul, instead of a prophet of the Soul itself."<sup>31</sup> A subtle and complex example of Emerson the preacher is a passage in "The Young American" (1844), written after the death of his son:

There is a sublime and friendly Destiny by which the human race is guided,—the race never dying, the individual never spared,—to results affecting masses and ages. Men are narrow and selfish, but the Genius, or Destiny, is not narrow, but beneficent. . . . This Genius, or Destiny, is of the sternest administration, though rumors exist of its secret tenderness. It may be styled a cruel kindness, serving the whole even to the ruin of the member, . . . reserving all profits to the community, without dividend to individuals. Its law is, you shall have every thing as a member, nothing to yourself. . . . Nature thus saves and uses, laboring for the general, that we poor particulars are so crushed and straitened [sic], and find it so hard to live. . . . Our condition is like that of the poor wolves: if one of the flock wound himself, or so much as limp, the rest eat him up incontinently" (*CW*, 1:230-31).

In this passage, Emerson informs us that the individual is not a powerful modifier of "Destiny," but a finite, expendable, even vicious, entity; and that "sublime and friendly Destiny," although it fosters a meliorative tendency of the race in general, is hardly "friendly" to the individual. His youthful optimism about the ability of the individual to build his own world according to "the pure idea" in his mind had apparently been lost to common sense in common tragic experience, if not to the dark implications of Darwinian theory.

Another example of the public-preacher Emerson is a journal entry two years later, in 1846: “*First*; the perception of one polarity impressed on all the universe, & on all the particles: As the whole has its law, so each has its genius. . . . Trust that the Tendency of the Whole is the good of the Individual, is the Universal of faith. . . . I stipulate for no private good. If truth live, I live; if justice live, I live. Put men to death by principles, & they will not grumble. . . . Do not truck for your private immortality. If immortality is best, you shall be immortal” (*JMN*, 9:403). This passage and the previous one are filled with echoes of earlier preoccupations. Emerson was still holding to his themes of melioration, of genius, of the uniqueness and universality of each individual, and to his doubt about *personal* immortality. But now his perspective is limited to the ordinary, to the flat scene of the objective. He makes a conventional distinction between “the Individual” (the Soul), and “men” (the body), and means simply that an individual does not grumble when he saves his immortal soul by sacrificing his material body to spiritual principles.

And another example: In 1867 Emerson remarked to the Free Religious Association (which he helped found): “It is only by good works . . . that worship finds expression.”<sup>32</sup> Two years later, he wrote: “The first simple foundation of my belief, that the Author of Nature has not left himself without a witness in any sane mind: that the moral sentiment speaks to every man the law after which the Universe was made; . . . that there is a force always at work to make the best better and the worst good. . . . The health and integrity of man is self-respect. . . . Every believer holds a different creed” (*W*, 11:486-88). There is no question that in his later years, Emerson, the humanitarian preacher, dominated Emerson, the solitary mystic.

But Stephen Whicher, counterbalancing Bishop, is also correct when he says that always beyond Emerson’s “humanism lies his superhumanism . . . . Beyond the region of ethics and economy and the conduct of life, lies the lonely world of the one Life, the onward flow of the eternal Energy and the immutable laws it creates and obeys.”<sup>33</sup> Neither the young private Emerson nor the elder public Emerson was fundamentally a humanist. He never believed that man is the measure; he never humanized God; he divinized the human; he was not a moralist of the picayune. This essential Emerson, this genius of superhumanism, remained throughout the last part of his life hidden under smiles of geniality, but suddenly breaking forth in “Perpetual Forces” (1862): “The last revelation of intellect and of sentiment is that in a manner it severs the man from all other men; makes known to him that the spiritual powers are sufficient to him if no other being existed; that he is to deal absolutely in the world, as if he alone were a system and a state, and though all should perish could make all anew” (*W*, 10:83).

In this incredible statement of subjective idealism, Emerson threw to the wind all his notes and lectures on the nature of God, on culture, on scientific

evolution, and returned to his old, audacious ahistorical genius of *Nature* and "Self-Reliance": "I shun father and mother and wife and brother, when my genius calls me" (*CW*, 2:30). "Since the Soul of things is in thee/Thou needest nothing out of thee" he affirmed of himself after Ellen died (*JMN*, 3:292). Always for him there was more than society and nature; there was at last (only) himself and all that "himself" meant; always his identity as the universal mind; always as the central "I" (that living reality beneath appearances) observing now his body in old age drifting towards death, the whole dream of nature receding, those hills, the softness of the sky, the outline of those trees, the armies of his friends crying out, the face of that beautiful boy.

And yet there is something strident about this incredible statement (which, by the way, appears to have been interjected between mild passages concerning "celestial thoughts" and men working together within "a system of mutual aid, all for each and each for all") that suggests a radical idealism in an increasingly materialistic age, crystallizing into dogma. Charles Eliot Norton complained in 1873 that Emerson's "optimistic philosophy" had "hardened into a creed . . . closing the avenues of truth. . . . He can accept nothing as fact that tells against his dogma. . . . To him this is the best of all possible worlds. . . . He refuses to believe in disorder or evil. . . . Good is absolute, evil but good in the making."<sup>34</sup>

Elizabeth Peabody asked Emerson: "Is there not something in God corresponding to and justifying this human sensibility," and he answered emphatically, "No!"<sup>35</sup> This exchange took place in 1836 at the same time that he was celebrating his mystical experience in *Nature* and developing his theory of identity. Thus even at this early date he had concluded that "the infinitude of the private man" is beyond "human sensibility." And since he retained his theory of correspondence throughout his later years, in which nature is symbolic of the soul, the question must arise again: Did he come to believe that the infinitude of the "private" mind is manifested as inhumane violence in nature as well as sublime and creative beauty? We have seen that he thought "absurd" the idea "that pure malignity exists." But how could he explain natural evils, such as earthquakes, tornadoes, disease, deaths of beloved ones? Were they merely absences of good? And how about his own inevitable death?<sup>36</sup>

Emerson created his monistic philosophy of the identity of God and man in part to support his conviction that "here or nowhere is the whole fact," that answers to the great questions of life and death are neither in some supernatural realm, nor in the past, nor in the future, nor in deep space, nor in the hearts or minds of some privileged few, but here, now, as universal intuitions of each individual. In *Nature* (1836) he had assured his audience that "undoubtedly we have no questions to ask which are unanswerable," and had exclaimed, "I see all" (*CW*, 1:7,10).

Yet at the same time, in “Experience” (1844), after the the death of Waldo had taught him the true gravity of natural evil, he made the brave claim “that grief can teach me nothing, nor carry me one step into real nature.” But he also said that he grieved that this claim was true (CW 3:29)—hence, incidently, accepting the psychology but dismissing with deep regret the theology of the Christian cross. Sixteen years later in “Fate” (1860) he proposed that “if evil is good in the making, . . . if calamities, oppositions, and weights are wings and means,—we are reconciled” (W, 6:35). However, the subjunctive mood of this proposition reveals his real feeling, namely, that such an attempt by the Understanding to give human meaning to natural evils was as dissatisfying as are similar ones by the orthodox: it was too rational, too shallow, to reconcile him to the anguished emptiness of the natural evils he had known. Even as the consciousness of God he had to admit that he could not “see all,” that he could not read the full nature of (his) infinitude any more than the Calvinists could read the inscrutable will of God.

During his last years, he retreated into the moral business of political and social action. But in moods of solitude he must have considered how his poetic vision in *Nature* of man’s divinity had changed into his final declaration that “the spiritual powers are sufficient to him if no other being existed”—all the while remembering Ellen, Charles, and Waldo; all the while denying that this world was not the best of all possible worlds; assuming true (as he had since *Nature*) that “there is no doctrine of the Reason which will bear to be taught by the Understanding” (CW I:81); willing true to be forever.

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## Notes

- 1 *The Journals and Miscellaneous Notebooks of Ralph Waldo Emerson*. Edited by William H. Gilman et al. 16 vols. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960-82), 1:92; 1822. . Hereafter designated as *JMN* in the text.
- 2 *The Collected Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson*. Edited by Alfred R. Ferguson et al. 5 vols. to date. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971-), 1:37. Hereafter designated as *CW* in the text.
- 3 For a definition and discussion of “subjective idealism” see my essay, “The World is a Divine Dream”: Emerson’s Subjective Idealism,” *The Concord Saunterer*, New Series, Volume 5 (Fall, 1997), 93-110. Jean Grondin argues that Leibnitz and Fichte (not Descartes or Kant) are the true predecessors of the thinkers who held that the “I” is “the ultimate reference point of reality” (See his essay, “Leibniz and Fichte,” in *Fichte: Historical Contexts/Contemporary Controversies*, ed. Daniel Breazeale and Tom Rockmore [Humanities Press, Atlantic Highlands, New Jersey, 1994], 181). It is obvious that philosophies like Emerson’s,

which designate the "I" as essential reality are antithetical to "the recent trend of deconstructivism" that claims that "the I or the human subject [is] a mere invention, a fiction typical of the Enlightenment and its stress on the autonomy of the human self" (Grondin, in *Fichte: Historical Contexts/Contemporary Controversies*, 181).

- 4 *The Complete Sermons of Ralph Waldo Emerson*. 4 vols. Edited by Albert J. von Frank. Introduction by David M. Robinson. (Missouri: University Press, 1989) 3:103-04. See Channing's sermon "Father of Spirits," published for the first time in my book, *Studies in Religion in Early American Literature* (New York: University Press of America, 1983), 125-141. Emerson very likely heard Channing deliver this sermon in 1823. In January, 1842, both Emerson's five year old son, Waldo, and Henry Thoreau's older brother, John, died. For the sake of commiseration, Emerson may have shown Thoreau his own sermon entitled "Consolation for the Mourner." Thoreau wrote in his journal on 19 February 1842: "The death of friends should inspire us as much as their lives. If they are great and rich enough, they will leave consolation to the mourners before the expenses of their funerals" (*The Journal of Henry D. Thoreau*. Edited by Bradford Torrey and Francis H. Allen. 1905; [rpt. New York: Dover, 1962], 1:98).
- 5 Ralph L. Rusk, ed. *The Letters of Ralph Waldo Emerson*. 6 vols. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1939), 1:318.
- 6 See Alan D. Hodder, *Emerson's Rhetoric of Revelation* (University Park, Penn: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1989), especially pages 56-68, for a fine discussion about how the death of Ellen helped Emerson consolidate his premise of "the God within."
- 7 See my essay, "Emerson's Transcendental Individualism," *The Concord Saunterer*, New Series, Volume 3 (Fall, 1995), 92-93. Emerson wrote in "Manners": "Let the incommunicable objects of nature and the metaphysical isolation of man teach us independence" (CW, 3:80). See David Robinson, *Apostle of Culture*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1982), 133, for a discussion about Emerson's rejection of the idea of God as a person.
- 8 Emerson meant by the term "law," immanent, universal spiritual laws and, later in his philosophic development, universal laws of nature corresponding to spiritual laws. See William Rossi's important essay, "Emerson, Nature, and Natural Science" in *A Historical Guide to Ralph Waldo Emerson* [New York: Oxford University Press, 2000], especially 122-124. For some examples Emerson wrote: "Underneath all Appearances & causing all appearances are certain eternal Laws which we call the Nature of Things" (JMN, 5:222). In "The American Scholar"

he stated: "Help must come from the bosom alone. . . . If there be one lesson more than another which should pierce his [the scholar's] ear, it is, The world is nothing, the man is all; in yourself is the law of all nature. . . . in yourself slumbers the whole of Reason; it is for you to know all; it is for you to dare all" (*CW*, 1:69). He held that moral laws take priority over the idea of a personal God: "The moral sentiments are immutable. Was there ever a moment in your life when you doubted the existence of the Divine Person? Yes. Was there ever a moment in your life when you doubted the duty of speaking the truth? No. Then is one mutable, the other immutable" (*JMN*, 5:28; 1837).

- 9 For a consideration of Emerson's concept of "the universal mind" see Ronald A. Bosco's persuasive essay, "The 'Somewhat Spheral and Infinite' in Every Man: Emerson's Theory of Biography" in *Emersonian Circles: Essays in Honor of Joel Myerson*, ed. by Wesley T. Mott and Robert E. Burkholder (New York:University of Rochester Press, 1997), especially 82-92. Emerson recorded a deeply religious vision:

I was born & came into the world to deliver the self of myself to the Universe from the Universe [the Universal] . . . & then immerge [sic] again into the holy silence & eternity, out of which as a man I arose. God is rich & many more men than I, he harbors in his bosom. . . . When I wish, it is permitted me to say, these hands, this body, this history of Waldo Emerson are profane & wearisome, but I, I descend not to mix myself with that or with any man. Above his life, above all creatures I flow down forever a sea of benefit into races of individuals. Nor can the stream ever roll backward or the sin or death of a man taint the immutable energy which distributes itself into men as the sun into rays or the sea into drops (*JMN*, 7:435).

- 10 Emerson wrote in *Nature*: "The Supreme Being, does not build up nature around us, but puts it forth through us" (*CW*, 1:38). About this metaphor, B. L Packer writes that it "seems to suggest that natural phenomena are somehow being extruded through us like toothpaste—or, as Burke prefers to put it, like offal," (*Emerson's Fall*, [New York: Continuum, 1982], 58). But this theme is one of Emerson's most daring metaphors for his "organic" philosophy. Moreover, the theme of the subject creating the object is at the heart of much Romantic philosophy of the nineteenth century. Grondin points out that for both Leibnitz and Fichte the "I" is "a starting point that will unravel within itself the realm of alterity" (*Fichte: Historical Contexts/Contemporary Controversies*, 185). See my essay, "The World is a Divine Dream": Emerson's Subjective Idealism," *The Concord Saunterer*, New Series, Volume 5 (Fall, 1997), 93-110.

- 11 One problem in interpreting Emerson to mean that the Over-Soul is purposeful energy in nature, or moral laws, or love, or "Beautiful Necessity," and so forth, is that these are attributes or qualities of mind, not mind itself, a distinction Emerson himself often did not make. Henry Ware, Jr., in his "Divinity School Address," complained that Emerson's position was not logical in that "veracity, justice, love . . . are qualities of being; and like all qualities have no actual existence [apart from] the substances in which they inhere" (Quoted in Kenneth Walter Cameron, "Henry Ware's 'Divinity School Address': A Reply to Emerson," *American Transcendental Quarterly* 23: 86). Ware thought that such qualities belong to a person or persons, not to an impersonal It; and that to pray to qualities, attributes, principles, merely in themselves was vacuous idolatry. Cyrus Augustus Bartol many years later (1874) asked, doubtless having Emerson in mind: "You refuse Personality as a designation [to God]? Is there wisdom and no one wise, goodness and no one gracious, beauty and no one All-Fair?" (Quoted in *On Spirit and Personality*, ed. William G. Heath, Jr. (St. Paul, Minn.: John Colet Press, 1977), 103).
- 12 When Emerson rejected the idea that God is a person, a separate and distinct mind from men, he did not reject the premise that fundamental reality is mind; he described "God" as impersonal mind. But is not this an illogical concept. What is an impersonal mind? How can such a mind have an "I"? How can it possess attributes or qualities that require an agent? Ware and Bartol were right. For love, wisdom, justice, purpose, to exist there must be a lover, a wise man, a judge, a goal seeker. Energy by itself is not conscious or purposeful. "Laws of the soul" do not "execute themselves," much less create themselves.
- One answer to the question, If "God" is impersonal, who possesses these attributes or qualities? is that individual men and women possess them. But Emerson would not have been satisfied with this answer, because he believed that these qualities are not simply human attributes, situational and relativistic. On the contrary, he assumed that they are absolute, that their origin is not temporal and spatial, "not subject to circumstance." Accordingly, for him their agent must be absolute and transcendental. But, again, he rejected the concept of a personal God and believed that "God" is impersonal. And yet an impersonal agent cannot have personal attributes or qualities. How can the impersonal be a person? Consequently, Emerson was consistent in holding that the mind of each man and woman is an agent of these absolute attributes or qualities. Hence his theory of identity in which the individual and the universal are, paradoxically, identical.

Moreover, in intimate and experiential terms, Jonathan Bishop adventurously remarks that in regarding Emerson the “entire Soul-Nature relation can only become emotionally interesting when Soul seems to mean Self and Self means Me. We cannot take the impersonality of spirit seriously until it becomes a personal event,” and that Emerson was “fully aware of this paradox, not to say pleased with it” (*Emerson on the Soul* [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964], 93. I thank Wesley T. Mott for pointing out this reference. See his excellent essay, “Emerson and Individualism” in *A Historical Guide*, 97). We may argue then (continuing our attempt to make conceptually coherent and livingly significant Emerson’s thought) that for Emerson, the individual “i” (the very identity of the individual, the “i” that is you, the reader, the “i” that you cannot doubt but that you cannot conceptualize ) is in truth also the universal “I” or “God,” the “ultimate reference point of reality.” Thus logically, the absolute qualities of love, justice, beauty, that seem to float by themselves through the landscape of his language, do have an absolute agent. In this way we may understand Emerson’s radical interiority, his deep monism of the one “I.” This is what he meant by the “infinitude of the private man” (*JMN*, 7:342). It is no wonder that he referred to the Over-Soul as “the background of our being, . . . an immensity not possessed and that cannot be possessed” (*CW*, 2:161).

13

M. H. Abrams observes that “Carlyle exceeded even his German forbears in the claims he made for the absolute sovereignty of the unconscious in all valid activity, whether in the literary, political, or moral domain.” (*The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition* [New York: Norton, 1958], 216). Carlyle wrote in *Characteristics* (1831):

The fever of Skepticism [sic] must needs burn itself out, and burn out thereby the Impurities that cause it; then again will there be clearness, health. The principle of life, which now struggles painfully, in the outer, thin and barren domain of the Conscious or the Mechanical, may then withdraw into its inner sanctuaries, its abysses of mystery and miracle; withdraw deeper than ever into that domain of the Unconscious, by nature infinite and inexhaustible; and creatively work there. From that mystic region, and from that alone, all wonders, all Posies, and Religions, and Social Systems have proceeded: the like wonders, and greater and higher, lie slumbering there; and, brooded on by the spirit of the waters, will evolve themselves, and rise like exhalations from the Deep (Quoted in *The Norton Anthology of English Literature: Fifth Edition*,

ed. M. H. Abrams et al, two volumes [New York:Norton, 1962], 2:962-63).

- 14 See Jeffrey Steele for an elaboration of this point in the chapter, "Emerson's Myth of the Unconscious," in *The Representation of the Self in the American Renaissance* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1987), 21-22.
- 15 Whyte continues: "Schelling gave the earliest formulation . . . of the following argument, which for minds affected by the Cartesian dualism is of crucial importance: *that one organizing principle must pervade both the physical world and consciousness, but that outside our own awareness this principle is not itself conscious.* This unifying principle of organization and productivity operates without awareness in the determinism of nature, and with awareness in our sense of freedom" (*The Unconscious Before Freud*, [New York: Doubleday, 1962], 44, 116, 117).
- 16 *The Early Lectures of Ralph Waldo Emerson*. Edited by Stephen E. Whicher, et al. 3 vols. (Cambridge, Mass.; Belknap Press of Harvard University, 1959, 1964, 1972), 3:10. It would be very surprising if Emerson and Thoreau, at this time, had not discussed the concept of deity as unconscious. Thoreau wrote in 1840: "The unconsciousness of man is the consciousness of God, the end of the world." In 1842, he asked: "Why, God, did you include me in your great scheme? Will you not make me a partner at last? Did it need there should be a conscious material?" (*The Journal of Henry D. Thoreau*, I:48; 1:100).
- 17 I have a faint recollection that Emerson turned this journal entry into a public statement, but if he did, I cannot now locate it.
- 18 In "Experience" (1841) Emerson gave this image of the sliding scale its final form: "The consciousness in each man is a sliding scale, which identifies him now with the First Cause, and now with the flesh of his body" (CW, 3:42). The critic may claim that Emerson, in this image, did not conceive the individual and the Universal to be one identity, because Emerson said "*with* the First Cause," not *as* the First Cause. But Emerson also said "*with* the body," not *as* the body. Will the critic then claim that Emerson held that the individual is neither God nor the body, but floating somewhere in between? In fact, this is what he probably had in mind. He thought that the focus of "the consciousness" floats, as it were, up and down on the scale of mind, between the individual and universal poles of perspective. In the low objective perspective of the "Understanding" an individual knows himself to be a person distinct and separate from all other persons, a minute, awe-struck and humble entity in a vast and meaningless universe of time

and space; this is the ordinary perspective people have of the actual world. In contrast, in the high subjective perspective of transcendental "Reason," the individual knows himself to be the individual/Universal, the First Cause of the apparent universe of which he is the subjective center, the origin and core of all value. ("Not in nature but in man is all the beauty and worth he sees. The world is very empty, and is indebted to this gilding, exalting soul for all its pride." ["Spiritual Laws," *CW* 2:86]). Perspective is essential to understanding where Emerson is coming from in any particular passage.

19 Louisa May Alcott recorded that when a young child she "was sent to inquire for little Waldo, then lying very ill. His father came to me, so worn with watching and changed by sorrow, that I was startled, and could only stammer out my message. 'Child, he is dead!' was his answer. Then the door closed" (Quoted by George Edward Woodbury in *Ralph Waldo Emerson* [New York:Macmillan, 1907], 81).

20 Emerson advised in "Self-Reliance": "In your metaphysics you have denied personality to the Deity: yet when the devout motions of the soul come, yield to them heart and life, though they should clothe God with shape and color. Leave your theory as Joseph his coat in the hand of the harlot, and flee" (*CW*, 2:33). The ambience of theism, free of the shackles of ritual and dogma, faded in and out of Emerson's imagination.

21 Rusk, *Letters* 3:9-10. In "Threnody," his elegy to his son, Emerson wrote: "If I repine,/And seeing rashly torn and moved/ Not what I made, but what I loved,/ Grow early old with grief that thou/Must to the wastes of Nature go."

22 Emerson described his philosophy in the following wonderful metaphor, based on his ocean crossings:

Here we drift, like a white sail across the wild ocean, now bright on the wave, now darkling in the trough of the sea;—but from what port did we sail? Who knows? Or to what port are we bound? Who knows? There is no one to tell us but such poor weather-tossed mariners as ourselves, whom we speak as we pass, or who have hoisted some signal, or floated to us some letter in a bottle from far. But what know they more than we? They also found themselves on this wondrous sea. No; from the older sailors, nothing. Over all their speaking-trumpets, the gray sea and the loud winds answer, Not in us; not in Time. Where then but in Ourselves. . . . Underneath all these appearances, lies that which is, that which lives, that which causes. This ever renewing generation of appearances rests on a reality, and a reality that is alive (*CW*, 1:182; from the "Introductory Lecture" in the series "Lecture on the Times" (1841-1842)).

23 Packer quotes James M. Cox who said that “there is a sense in which Emerson literally feeds off the death around him,” and then says that Cox “points out the connection between Ellen’s death and the influx of imaginative energy that follows, between the death of Charles and the ‘strong assertion’ of *Nature*.” Packer is surely correct when she goes on to explain these influxes of energy to be defensive measures of the ego: “if Emerson had not developed such defenses very early on in life, it is hard to see how he could have survived as a man, let alone a writer” (*Emerson’s Fall*, 52). Emerson never courted suffering.

24 The famous passage in his journal is:

There ought to be no such thing as Fate. As long as we use this word, it is a sign of our impotence & that we are not yet ourselves. There is now a sublime revelation in each of us which makes us so strangely aware & certain of our riches that although I have never since I was born for so much as one moment expressed the truth, and although I have never heard the expression of it from any other, I know the whole is here,—the wealth of the Universe is for me. Every thing is explicable & practical for me. And yet whilst I adore this ineffable life which is at my heart, it will not condescend to gossip with me, it will not announce to me any particulars of science [spiritual life], it will not enter into the details of my biography, & say to me why I have a son & daughters born to me, or why my son dies in his sixth year of joy. Herein then I have this latent omniscience coexistent with omnignorance. Moreover, whilst this Deity glows at the heart, & by his unlimited presentiment gives me all power, I know that tomorrow will be as this day, I am a dwarf, & I remain a dwarf. That is to say, I believe in Fate. As long as I am weak, I shall talk of Fate; whenever the God fills me with his fullness, I shall see the disappearance of Fate. I am *Defeated* all the time; yet to Victory I am born (*JMN*, 8:228).

25 Stephen E. Whicher, *Freedom and Fate: An Inner Life of Ralph Waldo Emerson* (New York: A. S. Barnes, 1953), 151. Ronald A. Bosco, in his recent and informative essay, “Emerson and His Biographers” (*A Historical Guide to Ralph Waldo Emerson*, 278-280) clarified my own view for me by clarifying Whicher’s. Once again, I differ from Whicher (and Philip L. Nicoloff, Wallace E. Williams, and John Michael) in believing that although Emerson lost the freshness and naivete of the ethical idealism of his youth, he did not desert his philosophy of the

identity of God and man, of the universal mind and the infinitude of the individual, regardless of how he believed that "God" is manifested in nature. He said with determination: "I sit with the Cause grim or glad" (*JMN*, 12:524). In my opinion, he never was, nor psychologically could ever have been, a skeptic about his religious position. His intuitive theme of identity was the foundation of his cosmic optimism. Again, see Ronald A. Bosco (in "The 'Somewhat Spheral and Infinite' in Every Man: Emerson's Theory of Biography" in *Emersonian Circles*, especially 92-93).

26 Rusk, *Letters*, 3:238-39.

27 Emerson incorporated these lines near the end of "Emancipation in West Indies" in his discussion of the early brutal conditions of human evolution and "the civilization of the negro." At the end of the essay he assures the reader that mankind is inevitably evolving out of these conditions and that there is a moral law that "Man is one, and . . . you cannot injure any member, without a sympathetic injury to all the members," and that "there is a blessed necessity by which the interest of men is always driving them to the right" (*The Complete Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson*. Edited by Edward Waldo Emerson. 12 vols. Centenary Edition. [Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1903-4], 11:143-45, 147). Once spotted the journal passage about what is worth saving is saved not by compassion but by power, and which is embedded in the "politically correct" flat text of "Emancipation," springs out at the reader with an intensity of rhythm and metaphor that bears witness to the depth of Emerson's conviction.

28 Sherman Paul writes that the theory of correspondence was fundamental to Emerson, because it was "a way of seeing the universe in the light of human needs," of seeing "the universe as friendly, beneficent, lawful, and related to every part" (*Emerson's Angle of Vision* [Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1952], 2). This is true, but it ignores the problem of natural evil, which Emerson could not and did not try to evade.

29 1 September 1845, Emerson commented to J. Elliot Cabot: "This admirable Schelling, which I have never fairly engaged with until the last week. . . . I delight in his steady inevitable eye" (Rusk, *Letters*, 3:298).

30 The negative passages I have quoted do not contradict Gertrude Reif Hughes' premise that Emerson's "self which may be relied upon as a guide on the quest that is a quest *within* certainty, not a quest for certainty, is God." (*Emerson's Demanding Optimism* [Louisiana State University Press, Baton Rouge, 1984], 109). But they do bear upon Emerson's changing opinion about the character of fundamental reality,

and man's ability to know the depths of Being. William Rossi writes: "While his vision of physical nature changed dramatically over the course of his long life, there is reason to doubt that Emerson ever really abandoned teleology" (*A Historical Guide*, 120).

In advising Charles Eliot Norton in 1862 about the publication of a poem (apparently by Clough) Emerson wrote: "I would not print it . . . . It is the saddest and sincerest of odes. It should pass privately to all souls who are as much emancipated, & have learned how much history they can spare when they have been permitted a glance at the First Cause. But when it comes to the young public, it is a little rude. The affirmative part is short & vague, not an offset to the negative. . . . Meantime, the happiness of tender souls is assailed, whilst the dearest of all traditions is taken away, & nothing adequate is supplied." (Rusk, *Letters* 5:293). Emerson considered it his duty to protect "tender souls" from the negative, just as it was his strategy in his lectures, essays, and sermons, to protect his listeners, as much as integrity allowed, by camouflaging his own radical religious speculations with positive metaphor and conventional terminology.

31 Jonathan Bishop, "Emerson as Prophet," in *The Recognition of Ralph Waldo Emerson*. Edited by Milton R. Konvitz (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1972), 202.

32 *The Complete Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson*. Edited by Edward Waldo Emerson. 12 vols. (Centenary Edition. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1903-4), 11:480. Hereafter designated as *W* in the text.

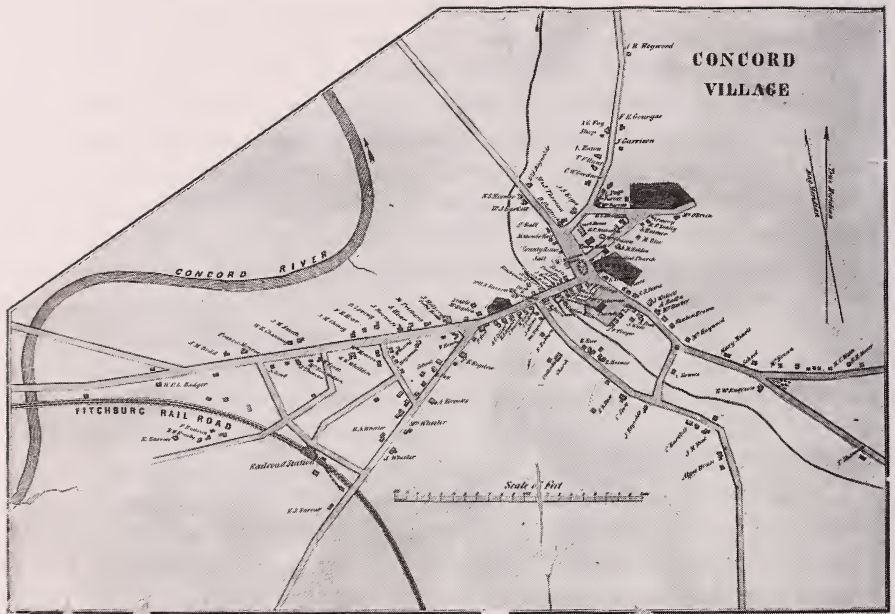
33 *Freedom and Fate*, 164.

34 Quoted in John McAleer, *Ralph Waldo Emerson: Days of Encounter* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1984), 620.

35 Quoted in F. E. Sanborn, ed. *The Genius and Character of Emerson* (Boston: Osgood, 1885), 169.

36 Elizabeth Peabody recorded that "A gentleman who stood with him [Emerson] at his brother Charles' grave, said he turned away from it with the words, 'Death is an absurdity!'" (Quoted in Sanborn, 170).





**Caroline Downes Brooks Hoar's Concord**

Inset of "Concord Village" from

H. F. Walling's *Map of the Town of Concord, Middlesex County, Mass.* (1852)

*Courtesy Concord Free Public Library*

*Mrs. Woodward Hudson's  
Memoir of  
Mrs. Ebenezer Rockwood Hoar*

**edited by Leslie Perrin Wilson**

Caroline Downes Brooks Hoar (1820-1892) was the daughter of Concord lawyer Nathan Brooks, stepdaughter of his wife Mary Merrick Brooks (president of the Concord Ladies' Anti-Slavery Society), a contemporary of Henry David Thoreau and girlhood companion of his sister Sophia, and—like the Thoreau children—one of Phineas Allen's pupils at the Concord Academy. In 1840, she became the wife of Ebenezer Rockwood Hoar (a son of Squire Sam Hoar), who achieved prominence as a lawyer, judge, Massachusetts senator, Attorney General of the United States in the cabinet of President Ulysses S. Grant, and a representative in the United States Congress.

Despite her high-profile husband, Caroline Brooks Hoar lived an essentially domestic and private life, almost all of it in Concord. She spent some time away at school in the 1830s. During a crisis of health in 1848, she lived for a period in a New York sanitarium. She sometimes stayed in Washington with her husband at the height of his political career. By and large, however, the Main Street neighborhood in which she had grown up was the center of her world. The period from her marriage until 1860, when her youngest child was born, was devoted to making a home and to bringing seven children into the world, and years after that to raising her family to adulthood. She appears to have succeeded in creating a happy home life for her husband and children. In his biography of E.R. Hoar (published in the 1909 Fourth Series of *Memoirs of Members of the Social Circle in Concord*), Edward Waldo Emerson reported that Judge Hoar “said that he considered his best achievement to have secured Mrs. Hoar and to have kept her.”

Although Caroline Hoar's family appreciated her, few students of nineteenth century Concord today are familiar with even the bare facts of her life. Unlike her learned sister-in-law Elizabeth Hoar (Rockwood's sister, the fiancée of Emerson's brother Charles, and an intimate of the Emerson family),

who was amply acknowledged in the letters and journals of Emerson, Thoreau, and their associates, Caroline Brooks Hoar has been largely forgotten. Marriage and motherhood have defined the extent of her identity.

Caroline Hoar was temperamentally disinclined to focus attention upon herself. She was shy and reserved, determined to avoid public notice, not given to chatty sociability. Her 16 July 1892 obituary in the *Boston Transcript*, for example, characterized her as “exceedingly modest and reserved.” Evidently out of respect for Mrs. Hoar’s natural reticence, Augusta Larned did not even refer to her subject by name in her obituary in the 28 July 1892 issue of *The Christian Register* (quoted by Mrs. Hudson near the end of her memoir). Moreover, Mrs. Hoar appears to have had an aversion to having her photograph taken. While her father, stepmother, half brother, husband, children, and friends all left portraits behind, no images of Caroline Brooks Hoar seem to have survived, even among her descendants.

Mrs. Hoar accepted traditional roles and responsibilities. She influenced the world around her through participation in organizations that allowed her to exercise her considerable intelligence and administrative ability within the context of community service. An officer of the Concord Female Charitable Society (to which Mary Merrick Brooks, Cynthia Thoreau, Louisa Dunbar, Lidian Emerson, and Elizabeth Hoar belonged), Caroline Hoar was also the founder in 1881 and first president of the Women’s Parish Association of the First Parish in Concord. Neither a feminist nor self-consciously an activist, she was nevertheless a woman whose personal gifts of mind and character commanded respect—principled, dignified, and full of good sense. Her *Boston Transcript* obituary described her as “a leader and a power,” “the centre and inspiration of almost every charitable movement that was started in the community.” A shy woman perhaps, but effective.

In addition to temperament, health considerations may also have contributed to Mrs. Hoar’s low visibility. Even as a young woman, she was occasionally forced to forgo social activities on account of poor health. She was laid low by illness on and off throughout her adult life. Frequent childbearing and its attendant duties may have exacerbated the root cause of her physical weakness, whatever it was.

But despite the factors limiting her circulation in the outside world, Caroline Brooks Hoar was nevertheless a vital part of the civic and social life of Concord through much of the nineteenth century. The records of Concord organizations in the Special Collections of the Concord Free Public Library document her commitment to improving the quality of life in her native town. Moreover, the published papers of the Emerson women highlight her position as an enduring friend of Concord’s “first family” as well as the variety of ways in which she served the community. Letters printed in *The Selected Letters of Lidian Jackson Emerson* (edited by Delores Bird Carpenter and published in 1987) refer to Mrs. Hoar’s preparing a Christmas tree for the children of Concord

in the Town Hall in 1853 and visiting the Emerson household with other local ladies in 1883 on what appears to have been some business of the Women's Parish Association. Mrs. Emerson wrote in one undated letter about her husband lunching with other guests at the Hoars' home, an occasion at which Mrs. Hoar "served all sorts of things—every luxury that one could imagine." From Ellen Tucker Emerson's *The Life of Lidian Jackson Emerson* (edited by Carpenter and published in 1992) comes the information that Ellen and Lidian visited Mrs. Hoar at Christmas time, that Ellen sewed side-by-side with her to provide clothing for needy babies, that the two taught Sunday school at the First Parish, where Caroline Brooks had been a Sunday school student of Lidian in the late 1830s. (Ellen emphasized, too, that her mother had always had a "satisfactory" friendship with Mary Merrick Brooks, whom Lidian admired "as a house keeper and a wife," and with whom she shared devotion to the antislavery cause and, later, an interest in spiritualism.) It is a shame that no correspondence between Caroline Hoar and her sister-in-law Elizabeth has surfaced to flesh out the picture of social relations within the Hoar family.

On 18 October 1909 at a meeting of the Women's Parish Association in the vestry of the First Parish in Concord, Bessie Keyes Hudson delivered a speech titled *Memories of Mrs. E.R. Hoar* (or, as recorded more fully in the printed 1909/1910 annual report of the Association, *Memories of Mrs. Ebenezer Rockwood Hoar, Founder of the Association and Its First President*) before an audience of one hundred people. Although close to forty years younger than Mrs. Hoar, Mrs. Hudson (1857-1942) had much in common with her subject. She too was born into a leading Concord family, was the wife of a powerful man and an active member of Concord community organizations. Daughter of George and Mary Brown Keyes, niece of John Shepard Keyes, Bessie Keyes married Woodward Hudson (son of journalist Frederic Hudson) in 1880. Over his career, Woodward Hudson was an attorney for the Boston and Albany Railroad and the New York Central Railroad and vice-president and president of the Boston and Maine Railroad. Mrs. Hudson served on Concord's School Committee and Library Committee and as president of the Louisa May Alcott Memorial Association. She belonged to the Concord Woman's Club, the Women's Parish Association, the Concord Female Charitable Society, and the Ladies' Tuesday Club. She knew and admired Mrs. Hoar. Like Caroline Hoar, Bessie Hudson knew the anguish of losing an infant child, a bond that she acknowledged in preparing her memoir. Moreover, both women lived not far from one another, Mrs. Hoar in the present #194 Main Street, Mrs. Hudson at what is now #252.

The typescript of Mrs. Hudson's lecture recently turned up in the processing of a rich collection of Hudson family papers—the gift of Marion Hudson Wilmot, daughter of Woodward and Bessie Keyes Hudson—in the Special Collections of the Concord Free Public Library. Based on first-hand information gathered by Bessie Keyes Hudson from people who had known Mrs. Hoar from childhood and on Mrs. Hudson's own personal acquaintance with her, this memoir includes vivid details of Concord in Caroline Downes Brooks's youth and later in the nineteenth century.



**Bessie Keyes Hudson**  
*Courtesy Concord Free Public Library*

Much has been made—and rightly so—of Mary Merrick Brooks's leadership of the antislavery movement in Concord. But there has been little material to support exploration of the influence that her abolitionism had on her young stepdaughter. Mrs. Hudson's biography provides some excellent detail on this subject. Bessie Keyes Hudson reveals that Caroline Brooks assiduously avoided sugar produced by slave labor and that she helped her stepmother make the famous "Brooks Cake" to raise funds for antislavery purposes. More importantly, she discloses that Mary Brooks took Caroline to Philadelphia in the spring of 1838 to attend the women's antislavery convention in the newly constructed Pennsylvania Hall. Mrs. Hudson presents in entirety a dramatic letter from Caroline Hoar to Elizabeth Prichard (her best friend and, later, as Mrs. Edward Sherman Hoar, her sister-in-law) describing the burning of the hall—a wonderful personal account from the particular perspective of a young woman. The fact that Caroline Brooks's early concern with human rights did not die with her marriage is indicated by her signing in 1849 the Concord petition of protest against the execution of Washington Goode, a Boston Black convicted of murdering another man in a fight over a prostitute. (The original petition is in the collection of the Thoreau Society.)

Mrs. Hudson may not always present the details of Mrs. Hoar's life with absolute accuracy, but her understanding of her subject's presence and influence is true. Her memoir of Mrs. Hoar is here transcribed in full (with annotations added by the editor) largely as it was written. Idiosyncrasies and inconsistencies of construction, capitalization, and spelling have been retained. Minor liberties have been taken with Mrs. Hudson's sometimes quirky punctuation to allow smooth reading of the piece.

### **Memories of Mrs. E.R. Hoar**

by Bessie Keyes Hudson

In the first quarter of the last century, anyone journeying West from Boston could leave on his right hand the Church and Village Common of Concord, and after skirting the Mill Pond, find another centre of village life and hospitality where the road divides before the present Public Library.<sup>1</sup>

At this time, on the right beyond the Block House and Grave Yard, was Bigelow's Tavern for the drovers and humbler folks, and Shepherd's Stage Tavern for the more well-to-do.<sup>2</sup> On the left was a country store with its varied stock, and a small office-building where Samuel Hoar and Nathan Brooks furnished able assistance to those needing the aid of Law. On the same side at a little distance, a Blacksmith's shop gave help to disabled beasts. A half dozen pleasant homes were grouped along Main Street beyond the point, while Sudbury Road was bordered by broad fields and scattered farm-houses and barns.



**Nathan Brooks House,  
intersection of Main Street and Sudbury Road**  
*Courtesy Concord Free Public Library*

The house now standing on Hubbard Street, the second from the Trinitarian Church toward the West, stood at this time on the triangle of land between Main Street and Sudbury Road facing East toward the village.<sup>3</sup> It was a dignified, comfortable looking white house, with a straight path to the front door, and, when I first remember it, somewhat over-grown by bushes of lilacs and syringa.

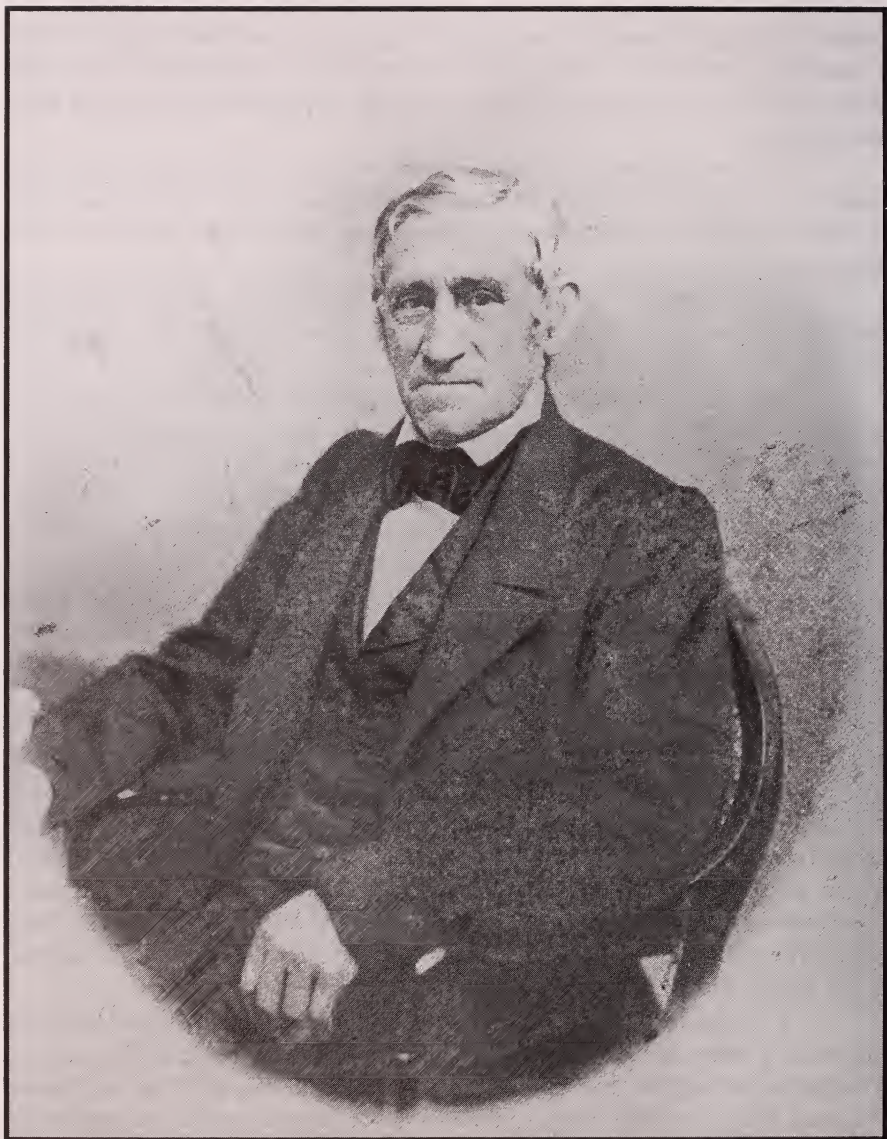
This was the home of Nathan Brooks, and here Caroline Downes Brooks was born on March 12<sup>th</sup>, 1820. Her mother, Caroline Downes of Boston, as she is called in the record of marriage intentions, only survived her daughter's birth nine days.<sup>4</sup>

Two years later, Mr. Brooks married Miss Mary Merrick,<sup>5</sup> daughter of Mr. Tilly Merrick, owner of the land across the way where his great-granddaughter, Miss Mary Brooks, now lives.

The family tradition is that Mrs. Brooks had her work cut out for her with the beautiful and high-spirited little girl who had come into her care. She was a woman of strong opinions and eager sympathies, and it is not unlikely that her relations with her step-daughter were sometimes difficult. After Mrs. Hoar's own marriage there was complete understanding and harmony between them for the remainder of Mrs. Brooks' life.

In the 1820ies and 30ies a pleasant group of young people were growing up together in this neighborhood. William and Moses Prichard and the three Prichard girls,<sup>6</sup> Rockwood, Frisbie and Edward Hoar with their two sisters,<sup>7</sup> Wm. Whiting and his sisters,<sup>8</sup> and the Thoreaus<sup>9</sup> were the most closely associated; but Martha and Abba Prescott, the Keyes boys and the older Bartlett boys and girls came to the Academy and joined in the young people's amusements though living at a little distance.<sup>10</sup> Four young girls of this group usually found together were Caro Brooks, Lizzie Prichard, Sophie Thoreau and Jane Whiting. The second of these, now Mrs. Edward Hoar, was Mrs. Judge Hoar's most intimate friend through life and has kindly told me about their childhood together, somewhat as follows. Caroline Brooks was very handsome, with smooth black hair, dark eyes and brilliant color.<sup>11</sup> Her entire devotion while a child was given to her Father, a man of gentle temper and quiet wit.

The fashion of that day was for the professional man to spend nearly all his waking hours in his office.<sup>12</sup> Mr. Brooks, therefore, beside being absent from home through the day, regularly took his lighted lamp after tea and crossed the street again. Perhaps for this reason his little daughter made the most of the time while her Father was shaving to enjoy his society. She was usually with him during this process and he taught her Latin and told her many stories. He delighted in rolling out sonorous Latin phrases like "*Honorum bonorum confiscatorum!*" and in catching the child with such sentences as "*Mea mater sus est mala.*" After the little girl reluctantly translated it "My mother is a bad pig!", he would pretend surprise that she did not see that it meant "Run, Mother, the pig is eating apples!"



**Nathan Brooks**  
*Courtesy Concord Free Public Library*

As soon as she was old enough to go to Church, he required her, on Sunday afternoons, to write what she remembered of the morning's sermon, and a remarkable book of such abstracts written at the age of eight is preserved.<sup>13</sup>

Her early education was at the Academy in the Lane.<sup>14</sup>

Mrs. Edward Hoar says that Caroline always came for her in the morning, and though only having crossed the street from her own house, would regularly take a glass and drink water from their pump before going to school.

Stopping as usual one morning for her friend, she found the Prichard household in some emergency of house-cleaning, and throwing off coat and hat, she gave up school for that day and joined in cleaning paint with great vigor.

In return for the morning visits, Elizabeth Prichard went across the street to her friend later in the day. Caroline, a fine needle-woman, was usually busy with her sewing, but she would stop to bring Russet apples from the cellar, if it was the proper time of the year, and the girls would sew and eat and talk, as girls love to do. Many fine garments were made in these hours, for Caroline had her own money<sup>15</sup> and would buy a whole piece of cloth at one time to cut into clothing which she made with great industry and cleverness.

Her tastes were rather domestic than scholarly, though she learned anything required without trouble. She played the piano with feeling and had a sweet voice in singing, and later used these talents for the pleasure of her children. Everyone speaks of her gift of writing. Her compositions were noted all through her school life, but unfortunately no specimens of them have been preserved.<sup>16</sup>

Always rather silent and with a timidity in expressing herself, especially to those nearest to her, she had a force of character which made her a leader among the younger girls, perhaps not always along the prescribed route.

Mr. Allen, the teacher,<sup>17</sup> is said to have boxed her ears once. The following anecdote illustrates the side of her character which might cause her teacher to forget himself. One day, in Latin reading, she pronounced "*itāque*" — "*itāque*." Mr. Allen stopped her and she tried every pronunciation but the right one. She was kept after school until the latest possible hour. When Mr. Allen from necessity dismissed her, she turned at the door and with a courtesy said, "*Itāque*, Sir!"

A few years later Mr. Allen gave up his school to a young man fresh from Harvard, handsome, romantic and having graduated first in his class. It was thought best for one of the older girls of this group to continue her education in Boston rather than in such a fascinating presence.

After her departure Mr. S.,<sup>18</sup> the young master, turned his attention to Miss Brooks. His devotion is said to have been very great, but its manifestations were of an intellectual and literary character and consisted in lengthy corrections and criticisms of themes and compositions. Miss Brooks in return criticised and corrected college themes which were in his hands and these exercises increased her natural power of writing.

It does not take much to give young people a basis for teasing. Miss Prichard, chancing to drive by one evening when Mr. S. was standing in the



**Mary Merrick Brooks**

**(chalk portrait by Alonzo Hartwell, 1852)**

Bequest of Mrs. Stedman Buttrick to the Concord Antiquarian Society, 1965.

*Photograph courtesy Concord Museum, Concord, MA.*

parlor returning books to Miss Brooks, near the lighted lamp, before the open windows, said to her friend the next day, "I see you are having private lessons, now!" The answer was a sarcastic compliment as to Miss Prichard's powers of observation.<sup>19</sup>

The tale of journals kept and exchanged was spread by John Keyes, a lively boy of the same age as Caroline Brooks and said by her to always find out everything.

To Judge Keyes' memory and "finding out everything" is due the information that Caroline Brooks had the only pair of rubber-boots in town, perhaps in New England, and went to school dry shod while the other girls picked their way through puddles in their slippers, and sat with wet feet, unless it was the season of moccasins. These rubber-boots were formed by pouring melted rubber over a clay mould and removing the clay after the rubber had hardened. They must have been more useful than graceful. Probably they came to Miss Brooks from some of the Merricks, her step-mother's people, who were in Southern trade.<sup>20</sup>

In 1833, the American Anti-Slavery Society was formed and from this time until the outbreak of the Civil War, Slavery or No-Slavery became a more and more vital subject in each household.

Mrs. Brooks' father, Mr. Merrick, was a slave-owner,<sup>21</sup> and at first Mrs. Brooks' sympathies were on that side. She is said to have gone to an anti-slavery meeting and to have been converted on the spot. Whether this be true or not, she became a most eager abolitionist and carried her step-daughter with her in zealous work for the cause.

At this time it was a matter of conscience to refuse to eat any but "free-labour" sugar and Miss Brooks never touched anything at parties where the sugar used might be the product of slave labour. She helped her mother bake and sell cake made of "free-labour" sugar, that people might eat without offence. The money so gained went to the cause of abolition. It was said by scoffers that all the free-labour given to any sugar was scooping it from one barrel to another in some back grocery, this action being enough to satisfy a conscientious grocer in the use of the name. However this might be, Miss Brooks' self-denial was remarkable in a young girl.

Mrs. Brooks was a most generous and eager giver. Stories are told of her charity to the dwellers in the shanties behind her house and of some of the impositions practised upon her by these wily neighbors. Her charity was described by a friend saying, "If Mrs. Nathan Brooks had cloth for *one* good chemise she would cut two skimpy ones and give one away."

A woman and boy were kept as regular servants in the Brooks family and seem to have been engaged, particularly the boy, rather with a view to their advantage than to their usefulness to their employers.

Mrs. Brooks was scrupulously careful to use only her own, not her husband's money, for the anti-slavery cause, Mr. Brooks not being wholly in



### **The Burning of Pennsylvania Hall**

From Elizabeth Palmer Peabody's copy of *History of Pennsylvania Hall, Which was Destroyed by a Mob, on the 17<sup>th</sup> of May, 1838* (Philadelphia: Printed by Merrihew and Gunn, 1838). *Courtesy Concord Free Public Library.*

sympathy with the methods of the abolitionists.<sup>22</sup> Perhaps she relaxed a little later in life for Judge Brooks, her son, said that in his youth he never knew whether he should find his hats and coats or what rooms in the house he should be allowed to enter, rooms and clothing being impressed for the service of the underground railway.

The warm-hearted, clear-sighted young girl, growing up in this household, saw things in a proper proportion, and adopting the public spirited principle of responsibility for the welfare of those less fortunate, she learned to use a rare wisdom in giving, which added to the helpfulness of her gifts.

The young people of this time had their amusements together, tea-parties, walking and riding parties, and driving in chaises. Miss Brooks' health did not always allow her to take part in these affairs, but she was considered a brilliant addition whenever she could be secured.

Judge Keyes tells of a disappointment now at least seventy years past. He was preparing for some college examinations<sup>23</sup> and his father promised him that, if they went well, he should have a new Shepherd chaise, with yellow wheels. With the faith of youth in his own powers, he, upon this, invited Miss Brooks to drive to Cambridge with him for a Φ.B.K. celebration. Unfortunately the examination was not up to the mark. The yellow chaise was not forth-coming. Mr. Keyes and Mr. Brooks decided the young people were too youthful to make such a trip alone together, and Miss Brooks went with Martha Prescott and some of her older friends.

In 1838, the two friends, Caroline Brooks and Elizabeth Prichard, were to go to Mr. George B. Emerson's school in Boston.<sup>24</sup> Miss Prichard went at the beginning of the year but Caroline Brooks went first to Philadelphia with her mother for anti-slavery meetings and the dedication of a new Hall where such meetings could be held, other halls and churches being barred to this cause. Her daughters have a letter written to Miss Prichard describing the riots in Philadelphia.<sup>25</sup>

The letter is dated "Philadelphia, May 13, 1838," but finished in Washington and tells the story as follows: "I suppose you have heard of the mob at Philadelphia. We went to meetings morning, noon and night. Our convention was held in a splendid building, erected for *free discussion*, called 'Pennsylvania Hall,' dedicated to *Virtue, Liberty and Independence*. This motto was written in large letters in an arch over the platform for the speakers. The Hall was just finished in the most beautiful manner. We were mobbed. Brickbats, clubs and stones came into the windows, but of no avail. It was the evening that some ladies spoke. Mrs. Angelina C.C. Weld, Miss Grimke, Mrs. Chapman, Miss Kelley and others.<sup>26</sup> Gentlemen also. Mrs. Chapman was speaking when window sashes broke in and glass came rattling down in all directions. She looked very beautiful. She is very white and fair, bright looking and a sweet expression about her mouth. She spoke very calmly through the whole, till the mob began

to rush up the steps to the Hall. Men and women, frightened almost to death, started from their seats. You know what a rushing sound this makes in a crowded building; this, with the howling, screeching and screaming, oaths and yells without, carriages rolled around the building to make a noise, the alarm of fire screamed in every direction, glass rattling, etc., made a most terrific scene. She calmly folded her arms and stood firmly fixed in a noble cause, to stem the tide of public hatred. The President arose to assure them there was no fire, that they must be quietly seated and no danger would meet them. They were seated and she went on as calmly. I never saw women behave so well as this audience. There were no screams and all was comparatively quiet. The mob was thus totally defeated and this, I suppose, exasperated them. The next day the Ladies alone held a meeting. The mob were around all day interrupting our proceedings by their noise. In the evening we were to meet again. We went to the building, but the Mayor had taken possession of the building and would not give us admission. The street was so crowded that we could not possibly have found a place large enough to have held our bodies. Mother and I were alone, for the gentlemen at Mrs. Burr's, though they knew we were going, never offered their services, but were very ready to advise us by all means not to venture. When we turned to leave the building there was no way of crossing the street. Mother was for keeping on, but I went alone to cross and said, 'Will you please to let me pass.' They immediately separated all down the street, saying, 'Oh, she's an Abolitionist, she's an Abolitionist.' And we walked home in all the dignity of our womanhood. The hall was burnt to the ground that night. The mob made Battering Rams and tore down what they could, then set fire to it, and that splendid new building was burnt to the ground. Splendid lamps, chandeliers, astral lamps, books, carpets, everything. It looked beautifully from the top of our house. The men gave up their convention and adjourned *sine die*, but we persevered unto the end, held our meetings in different buildings, the mob following us around, till we had finished our business. I hope you are not tired of this dull history of our proceedings, but I will close. I am become so black that I expect to be kidnapped here in Washington. Write immediately. Your affectionate friend, Caroline."

Certainly Miss Brooks answers to Garrison's description in his letters of those present at these stirring scenes. "The floor of the Hall was densely crowded with women, some of the noblest specimens of our race ... nearly three thousand people in the Hall ... The audience rose in some confusion and would undoubtedly have been broken up, had it not been for the admirable self-possession of some individuals, particularly the women."<sup>27</sup> This was surely an alarming experience for a girl of eighteen, and bravely met.

Upon returning to Boston, Caroline joined her friend at Mr. George B. Emerson's school and the girls boarded together in the house of a kinswoman, Mrs. Grosvenor.<sup>28</sup> Here they were very happy, having their own sitting-room with a fire as well as a comfortable bed-room. In the two years at Mr. Emerson's, Caroline always had the highest marks, five, in composition, and her other work was satisfactory.

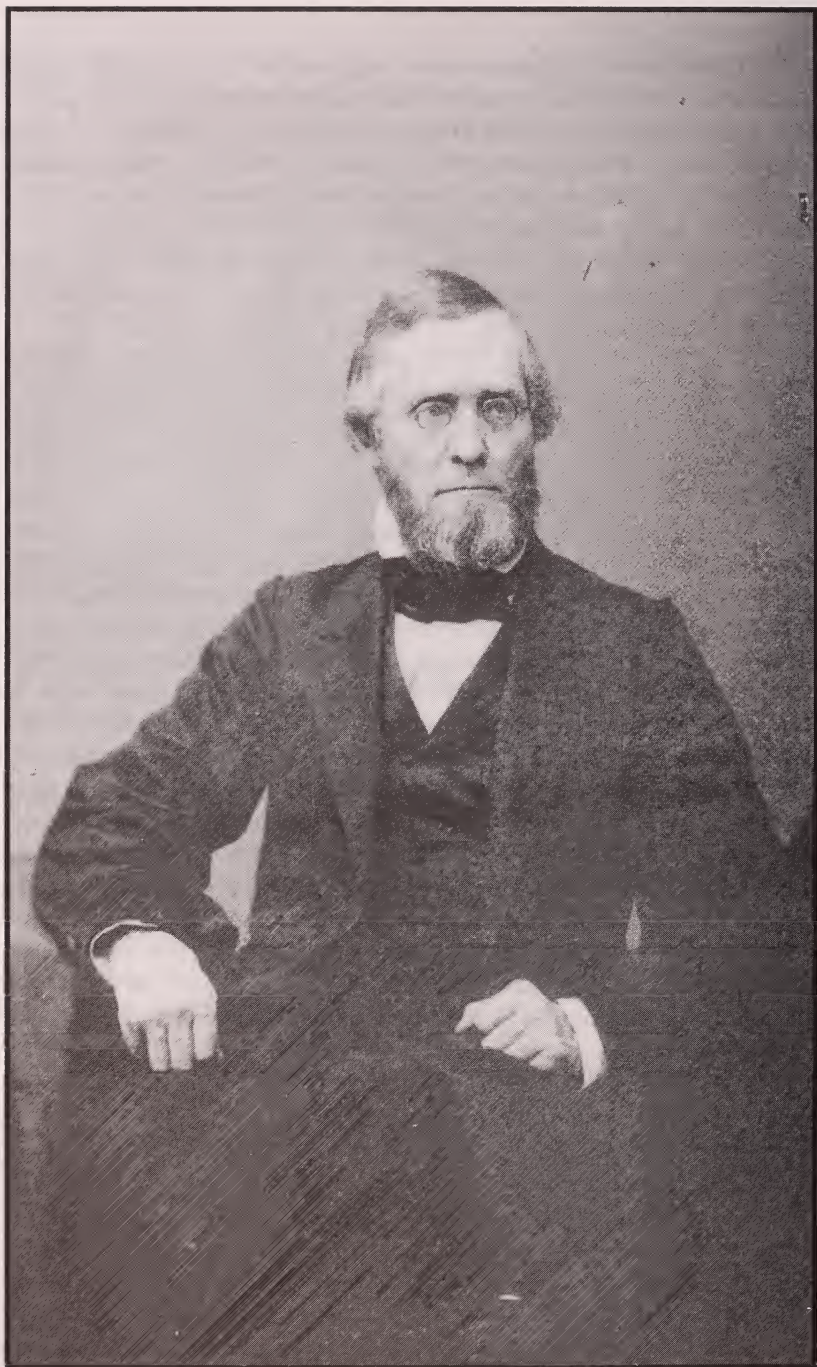
The difference in age between Judge and Mrs. Hoar made him ignore her as a little girl during the Concord school days.<sup>29</sup> Then he was absent for his college course and for two years teaching in Pittsburg. After this, returning to Concord to take up the study of law in his Father's office, we hear of his saying to a friend, "I should like to see this Caroline Brooks people talk so much about!" Evidently, the seeing was mutually satisfactory, for before very long, one night in Boston, after the candle was extinguished and the two girls were preparing for sleep, Caroline whispered to Elizabeth, "I am engaged!" Her suitors were so many that Elizabeth asked, "Which is it?," and was told "Rockwood."

They were married on Thanksgiving Day, November 20, 1840, by the Rev. Barzillai Frost<sup>30</sup> at Miss Brooks' house on Main Street. Elizabeth Prichard was wanted and expected as bridesmaid. Unfortunately her first position as teacher for a school in Maine had been accepted. The school opened early in the Autumn and there was no possibility of postponement; neither was a return for a short time possible with the means of travelling of those days. This was a serious disappointment to both girls. Elizabeth's place was filled by her younger sister, Amelia, and bride and bridesmaid were said to have been a very handsome pair. Mr. J. Fay Barrett<sup>31</sup> was groomsman for Judge Hoar and the same four were able to stand together and receive their friends again fifty years later.<sup>32</sup>

Mr. and Mrs. Rockwood Hoar began their housekeeping in the house next to his father's, where Mrs. John Brown now lives.<sup>33</sup> Here they lived for a few years while the house known as "Judge Hoar's" was being built.<sup>34</sup> The nearness to their relatives and the village, and the garden extending to the river made them choose this rather cramped site in preference to the more remote open places farther up the street. The original house was not much more than the central portion of the present building but was planned with a view to extension. Mrs. Hoar had an unusual gift for house-planning and not only arranged the additions to this house, as they were successively built, but made plans for several small houses which Judge Hoar built later for tenants. Her advice was always extremely practical and helpful to her friends, if they were remodelling their houses in any way.

For twenty years, Mrs. Hoar was closely occupied by family duties. Of her seven living children, Caroline was born in 1842, Sherman in 1860.<sup>35</sup> Her second child, a daughter, Sarah Sherman, born in 1844, only lived five months. More than forty years afterwards, Mrs. Hoar spoke of this loss with understanding sympathy to a mother meeting a similar sorrow.<sup>36</sup> She always spoke of Sarah Sherman with her other children and kept her memory alive in the family.

Mrs. Hoar had an able assistant through all this time of the children's babyhood and youth. Miss Clarissa Cutter,<sup>37</sup> better known as "Auntie Cutter" to the family and friends, carried out the details of household management which Mrs. Hoar had planned, and was friend and comforter to the older children when their mother was occupied with the care of one or more little ones. Years later,



**Ebenezer Rockwood Hoar**  
*Courtesy Concord Free Public Library*

when in her Sunday School class some rather flippant remark was made about "old maids," Mrs. Hoar spoke strongly of the comfort and help an unmarried woman often was to the people about her. If she did not mention Miss Cutter by name, we nevertheless understood the reference to be to the much valued help received in her own house.

The centre of initiative and authority for this complex household was in Mrs. Hoar. Her husband's time and strength were fully employed by his profession. As Dr. Emerson's life of Judge Hoar is now in print, and Mr. Storey's fuller life is in preparation, I have, purposely, not tried to give his part of the family life.

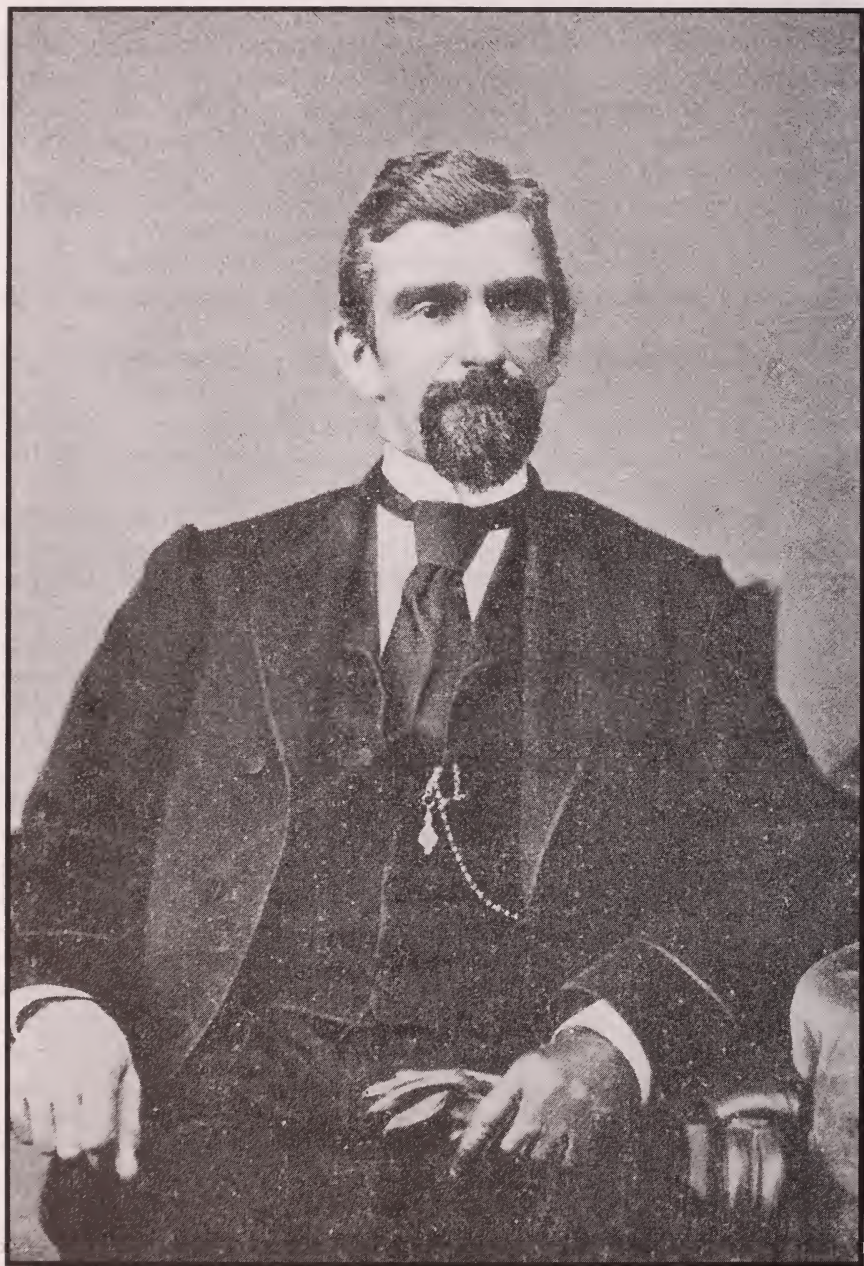
Notwithstanding the size of her own family, Mrs. Hoar's house was always open to kindred and friends. Her hospitality began with the starting of her own home. There was a severe storm on her wedding day, and a young man among the guests who had no place to stay over night was taken to the new home by the bride and groom.

Cousins to the second and third degree, from five or six different families, were invited to spend a year, or three years at a time, in her house and attend the Concord schools. There was usually a cousin about the age of each of her own children glad to come for this purpose. Rockwood Hoar<sup>38</sup> and other cousins habitually spent their Sundays in Concord, during their college course, adding much to the social life of the young people where partners were not too numerous.

An amusing story of Mrs. Hoar's early housekeeping comes to us from her sister-in-law, Mrs. George Brooks.<sup>39</sup> For some 19<sup>th</sup> of April celebration, probably 1850, a collation was prepared at his house for Judge Hoar and a party of friends, Mrs. Hoar being upstairs at the time with a young baby. She heard people come in, enjoy the entertainment and depart. A little later Judge Hoar arrived with his party, to find that a detachment of Pepperell militia had mistaken their directions, entered the house, and finding a collation spread, had consumed it!

Mrs. Brooks, unfortunately, does not remember what was done afterward on this occasion, but another story from the family annals shows that Mrs. Hoar was able to meet any emergency. At a Thanksgiving party, to which many relatives were invited, the table was loaded with good things, and it was just time to throw open the dining room doors and welcome the hungry guests, when the centre leg and prop of the extended table gave way and the gravy, cranberry sauce and other requisites of a New England Thanksgiving dinner came together in a mass with the china and glass. Mrs. Hoar confessed to having wept a few tears in the seclusion of the back stairs, but such was her power of control that in just half an hour the guests were invited to a freshly arranged table by a smiling hostess.

Judge Brooks, Mrs. Hoar's brother, was only a boy at the time of her marriage, but they were very near to each other in spite of the difference in age. He spent a year with her as man of the house while Judge Hoar was in Europe, and Charles, the child born at this time, was particularly dear to him among his



**George Merrick Brooks**  
*Courtesy Concord Free Public Library*

nephews and nieces.<sup>40</sup> He always called him "my boy!" A few years after this Judge Brooks had an alarming hemorrhage from the lungs, which confined him to the house for a winter. During his illness, Mrs. Hoar never let a day pass without spending some hours with her brother, reading aloud to him, and by her encouraging presence helping on his recovery. A year spent in foreign travel completely re-established his health.<sup>41</sup> Judge Brooks never liked any reference to the half relationship between himself and Mrs. Hoar, always saying when it was mentioned, "But it never made a bit of difference!" When he and Mrs. Brooks were married they began housekeeping in the next house to his sister's, where Mr. Buttrick lives now,<sup>42</sup> and Mrs. Hoar took great pleasure in her brother's happiness. Mrs. Brooks says she found that a certain sternness, which sometimes abashed strangers meeting Mrs. Hoar for the first time, was really a form of shyness, and soon disappeared. Her reticence was marked toward those most nearly related to her, and Judge Brooks often noticed with surprise the freedom with which his sister talked to his wife. "There never was a lovelier sister" are Mrs. Brooks' final words.

During these years, Mrs. Hoar was usually to be found in the nursery overlooking the garden, where all her powers as a needle woman were required to clothe a growing family in days before ready-made garments were known.

Her household was controlled from here, and here her friends sought for advice on private or public matters. The serious work of the nursery was much enlivened by good natured fun at family or village happenings. Ill-natured gossip did not thrive in Mrs. Hoar's presence. The family doctor must be of importance to a young mother with growing children, and Mrs. Hoar found in Dr. Bartlett, who began his practice in Concord on the year of her birth, a friend as well as a physician.<sup>43</sup>

He had great admiration for Mrs. Hoar and respect for her judgment, often consulting her and asking her assistance in cases which required delicate handling. Through him she learned of needs in the community which she and her husband were glad to meet.

Mrs. Hoar spoke of this period of her life to a friend as a time when she felt set apart from the world, almost as if she were a different species from the rest of humanity, so constant and pressing were her duties as Mother and Mistress of a household.

The Civil War came soon after Sherman's birth, while Mrs. Hoar was still too closely tied at home to take the active part in the work of the Soldier's Aid Society,<sup>44</sup> which her natural ability would have given her. The lists of boxes sent from Concord show that she and her family did their share generously for the cause.

Perhaps the most terrible anxiety of her life came at this time from the enlistment of her oldest son Samuel, a boy of sixteen, and his dangerous sickness at the South.<sup>45</sup> Anyone who has read the journal written by the lad until his military service was cut short by fever can imagine the suffering of parents getting meagre accounts of such hardships. Fortunately, his Father was



**Elizabeth Hallett Prichard Hoar**  
(Mrs. Edward Sherman Hoar)  
*Courtesy Concord Free Public Library*

able to bring him home—a shadow of his former self—and he soon regained health and energy.

My first clear recollection of Mrs. Hoar is when Sherman was a little boy in kilts; probably in '64 or '65. A few children were spending a summer afternoon and staying to tea with Clara and Beth. We acted tableaux in the garden, Sherman being a valuable member of the troupe as "A Babe in the Wood," "Little Jack Horner" or other suitable character. Mrs. Hoar and Miss Cutter came down at the proper moment to act as audience. I remember her fine figure and dignified carriage, her black hair parted and smoothly brushed, and, I think, a lace cap with pink bows. The lace cap and bows were so associated with her later that I may be mistaken about this time. She was a most appreciative audience, showing herself highly amused, sometimes when we children did not intend to be funny, as is the puzzling way with grown-up people at children's shows.

I first remember the sun-dial in the garden this afternoon. The village boys were allowed to bathe at the river-landing after a certain hour, and they would hang about the sun-dial waiting for the shadow to reach the appointed mark. It was typical of Judge and Mrs. Hoar to give up their river bank for a part of every summer afternoon for the pleasure of their young fellow citizens.

By this time Elizabeth Prichard had become Mrs. Edward Hoar, and was settled with her husband and daughter on the farm in Lincoln, now owned by Mrs. Snelling.<sup>46</sup>

Every Sunday afternoon, whatever the weather, winter snow or summer tempest, Judge and Mrs. Hoar, with Miss Fanny and Miss Amelia Prichard, could be met jogging down through Walden woods in the comfortable family carriage drawn by the fat bay horse, to take their Sunday night tea at the Lincoln farm.

Perhaps the following story belongs to this time. Judge Hoar came in one day and said to his wife, "I left some holes up in your room which need attention!" Mrs. Hoar went up stairs presently prepared for darning, but she found that the holes were the meshes of a handsome black lace shawl which was spread on the bed for her surprise and pleasure.

Mrs. Hoar never became in any way a public woman, but, as she had more leisure and better health, she took more part in the organization of affairs outside of her own household.

The kindness of Mrs. William Wheeler in looking through the Charitable Society papers<sup>47</sup> has given us an interesting address of Mrs. Hoar's written in July, 1867, "with a sketch of the Society from its formation." It shows her unprejudiced, orderly method of considering a subject and her power of clear expression. I shall read from it at some length, even if I am forced for lack of time to omit details of other enterprises. Her own words are more interesting than other matter as her recommendations have been followed in the Charitable Society ever since.

You will see that the Charitable Society was going through one of those periods of new-birth which come to societies about once in a generation. The retiring officers were Mrs. Lydia Reed, President, Mrs. Cyrus Hosmer, Vice President (25 years' service), Mrs. Nathan Brooks, Treasurer (32 years' service), Miss Sarah Stow, Secretary (11 years' service).<sup>48</sup> What follows explains itself.

"The recent resignation of all the officers of the Charitable Society, has thrown upon unaccustomed hands the duties belonging to them. The persons named at the Annual Meeting in July to take their places, though feeling unequal to the performance of such labors as these workers of many years have accomplished, have consented to undertake these duties, for the present, rather than that this Society, which they believe to be a beneficent and necessary institution in the Town, should come to an end at this time, hoping that the Society will be able soon to find a corps of more efficient workers to replace them. This Board, seeking for information with regard to their new duties, have read the Constitution and looked over the Books of Record of the Society. They have come to these conclusions:

1<sup>st</sup>. That the Board of Directors is, by the Constitution, a body chosen by the Society from among themselves to, in the words of the Constitution, 'manage the concerns of the Society,' or, in other words, to do its work and accomplish its objects.

2d. That this Board should be chosen each year by the Society at its Annual Meeting: that it was the intention in this way to interest all the Society in its work, and by changes in the Board, all its members should in turn serve as workers: as whatever we labor for, we become interested in. The Society, by its annual subscriptions, furnishes the means by which its Board of Directors can accomplish the objects it has in view.

3d. That having had such an efficient Board of Officers re-elected for so long a term of years, though much work has been accomplished and the Poor been well cared for, has had this effect: the Society felt confidence that its work could be done, and trusting everything to the Board, as it ceased to feel a care of its work, it also lost its interest in it; the Society has gradually dropped off from the Board of workers and left them to perform all its duties. Besides this ill effect upon the Society, it has had a corresponding influence upon the Board. They, in their turn, though interested in the work, and gladly and willingly performing it, have undoubtedly sometimes felt that they had served the Society their full share, and also, that none were ready to take up the work, but all were willing that they should continue to labor.

In consideration of the above conclusions, it seemed best to the new Board, before beginning their work, to call a special meeting of the Society to consider its reorganization upon its original basis; that the Board may acquaint themselves with the nature of their duties and also that the Society may inform itself in regard to its relations to the Board.

There have been objections made from time to time in regard to the methods pursued by the Charitable Society. All Societies are liable to be criticised by lookers-on and I suppose the best way is to be sure you are right and then go

on with the work, without attending to the remarks of outsiders; but yet I would like to notice a few of these criticisms which have come to my ears, as it may assist us in deciding upon plans for the future."

The criticisms are then taken up in turn and answered. No. 1 being as to the advisability of the meeting then assembled and the answer is that as "There has been no Record of the Officers chosen at the Annual Meetings since 1847 till the one in 1866; and I think it at least doubtful whether in these 19 years the managers have always known or remembered that they were so. I would bring the Society and its Board of Managers nearer together that they may have a similar interest in the object they have in view."

Criticism No. 2: "Some have thought it was best to do away with the Society altogether; that there was no need for it, that it did more harm than good, etc." The answer was that "in the short time since the Annual Meeting, we have received many applications for aid, all worthy objects of our attention, and one of so pathetic a nature and of such pressing need, that we feel in haste to be permitted to begin our work as a reorganized Society, to give the needed help."

"The objection as to the deceitfulness of the poor could be obviated by choosing a manager for each district of the Town whose duty it shall be to acquaint herself with the cases needing assistance in her district, to receive any applications for relief and communicate it to the Society through its officers." I think this plan is still followed.

Another objection raised refers to the difficulty of providing places for the meetings of the Board. "This difficulty in finding a place of meeting would seem to indicate the propriety of changing the plan of our meetings. From some cause the ladies seem to have become tired of having the meetings appointed with them; either from there being so few to share the burden (or pleasure?), it returns too often upon the small number who wish to invite the meetings; or they have become discouraged by the irregularity of the attendance, and consider it hardly worth their while to suffer the inconvenience arising from it."

Then follows statistics of attendance, varying from 1 to 29 according to weather and distance. A recommendation follows that meetings should be tried in a hall. "There are those who object to this plan on account of the duty of sociability. I think no one who attended the meetings of the Soldiers Aid Society ever doubted their being social meetings."

More remarks follow on the social side of the society. "The social tea-drinking is very pleasant in itself, but I doubt if there is more work done for the poor with it, than there would be without it, ... it would be hardly worth while to sacrifice the working capacity of the Society to its social influence. It is said that its character as a Tea-Party is attractive to many, and that our members will decrease if this custom is given up; it is undoubtedly pleasant to all the ladies to meet together in this manner, but the Society would be best served by those members who were attracted to it by the desire to accomplish its objects and it must depend for the increase of its list of members upon reviving an interest in these objects."

Then comes a short statement of the valuable work of the retiring Board and the final sentence of the introduction: "But the present Board feel that they did not covet this work themselves, but that it was laid upon them; therefore, they can accept it cheerfully, and hope the way will be made clear and plain to them as they go on."

The Constitution is then stated in an abbreviated form, and a classified summary of the membership, donations and charities of the Society is given. About thirty pages of fine writing which we unfortunately have no time to read here.

Very little that is amusing in the Records of the Society has escaped Mrs. Hoar, and it is concisely put for the enlightenment of the members. She speaks of the thrifty principle of this Society which lends rather than gives. A suit of christening clothes, mourning bonnets and even handkerchiefs for children to carry to church are kept to lend. The comforts of old people such as raisins, sugar, currants at Thanksgiving, even "tobacco for Zilpah"<sup>49</sup> and rum and gin for the old and infirm are mentioned.

A list of old-fashioned names of materials is given such as "Quandrille," "Calamancos," "Stormant for boys' clothes," "Camblet" and "Leno muslin."

The names of some of the books read at the early meetings—"Miss Hannah More's Practical Piety," "Law's Serious Call," "Baxter's Heaven Lost," "History of Missions."<sup>50</sup> They permitted themselves to relax with this light literature when work was not pressing.

She notices the record of 1818 of "the slackness of some in paying their annual subscriptions," a perennial trouble in most Societies. Probably this knowledge of the Charitable Society is not new to you, but I hope these extracts have shown Mrs. Hoar's grasp of a subject and manner of setting it forth.

For several years in the early 70ies, Mrs. Hoar taught a Sunday School class<sup>51</sup> to which I belonged. The subject of our study was the Old Testament. Mrs. Hoar knew her Bible thoroughly, as few people do now-a-days, and impressed upon us its importance as literature and history. We learned to repeat many Psalms and she urged us to have in our memories a store of well-expressed, fine thoughts of great writers, to be called up in case of failing eyesight or remembered in times of sorrow. Little mention was made of doctrines or creeds, but we felt sure of Mrs. Hoar's unwavering Christian faith and her strong belief in the value of the simple services of the Unitarian church, of which she had become a member at the age of fifteen.<sup>52</sup> I remember a talk on Sunday observance, when someone asked why we kept the Jewish Sabbath, while Christ's teaching seemed to be for something freer. She very earnestly spoke of the value of a pause in life every seventh day, even if it were without religious significance. She said it was good for men and women to dress themselves in their best and break away from labour; of course, the best being for them to come together in some form of worship; and to have leisure for family and friendly pleasures and meetings.

As we girls were just leaving behind us the animal state of childhood and becoming conscious of forces of mind and spirit in ourselves, a few words about the relation of mind and body have always stayed by me. She said young people were apt to make good resolutions as to self-control, cheerfulness, etc., then become unnecessarily discouraged when they failed to fulfill their ideals of conduct. They did not take into account the imperfection of the machine. If they made allowance for bodily weakness they could go on hopefully without wasting strength in self-reproach. Hers was not the modern idea of using the mind as a tool for the control of the body; but, rather, to view our composite selves with such reason that physical variations, recognized as necessary, but unimportant, should make little disturbance in life.

Some people felt a certain awe of Mrs. Hoar, perhaps from her stateliness of carriage and a directness of speech which did not lend itself readily to small talk. In the several years of her class I never remember any of our ideas or efforts of expression, however crude, meeting with discouragement from her. It was a great delight to see a look of amused comprehension come over her face, handsome and perhaps a little severe in repose. Things which were jumbled in our minds would be stated clearly and wisely reasoned. Her bonnets at the different seasons always met my approval. I remember especially a real bonnet of velvet, tied under the chin with a large bow, as was the fashion of that day, and trimmed with pansies. It seemed to me all that was handsome and appropriate for an elderly lady, her age at the time being what mine is now.

Among Mrs. Hoar's many good works, perhaps the Sewing School held for several summers on Saturday mornings was one of the most useful. An errand for the Charitable Society led her to visit a poor woman who had a daughter twenty years old confined to the house. She took for their use a skirt, and a new braid with which to repair it. The woman said she need not leave the braid as she herself had no time, and her daughter did not know how, to sew. Mrs. Hoar was so horrified to find that there was a grown girl in Concord who knew nothing about sewing that she started the school at once.

Between 70 and 80 children were assembled, divided into ten or more classes. Every child had a bag for her work and after each session these bags were collected and carried to Mrs. Hoar's house. During the week, she, with the help of her daughters, examined each piece of work and prepared it for the next lesson. The regular sewing-stitches, button-holes and darning were taught. A few samplers, petticoats and dresses were also among the finished articles. The Mothers of the Town were very appreciative and willingly spared their girls on Saturday mornings at some cost to themselves.

Perhaps not the least useful result of the school was the acquaintance formed between people who would otherwise have never met. Many mothers of families will speak with pride of what they learned in Miss Clara Hoar's class, or say there never were such button-holes as those taught by a lady in this room (Mrs. William Wheeler).<sup>53</sup>

When the teaching of sewing was introduced into the Public Schools,<sup>54</sup> the summer sewing school was given up.



**Main Street home of Ebenezer and Caroline Hoar,  
decorated for 1875 centennial celebration of Concord Fight, with  
President Ulysses S. Grant and cabinet in front  
(Grant is second from left.)**

From card stereograph. *Courtesy Concord Free Public Library.*

In April, 1881, a meeting was called at Mrs. Hoar's. After we were assembled, she made a short opening speech in which she said that the leaders of the Unitarian church felt that there were many matters in the church which could be properly under the government of women; that it was felt that a union of women might be agreeable and useful. Such unions were being formed in other places, and, if enough of us were so inclined, one could be formed in Concord. Some people felt this to be unsuitable for women; that everything should be left to the men of a Parish. She herself believed a woman's organization would be wise. After a little talk, the Woman's Parish Association was organized and Mrs. Hoar was President for three years.<sup>55</sup>

A Boys' Club and Coffee Room, established for a short time in the building now the Wright Tavern, was the only unsuccessful enterprise of Mrs. Hoar's of which I have heard. She was almost entirely confined to her house just after its start or perhaps it would have gone better. It was a disappointment and discontinued after one winter's trial.<sup>56</sup>

Mrs. Hoar spent parts of two winters with her husband in Washington, when his duties called him there, and then she received with Mrs. Grant and other "Cabinet Ladies."<sup>57</sup> This was in strong contrast with her quiet home life, but if she saw something to be her duty, she did it even if it were an uncongenial task.

Judge Hoar's prominence in public life brought many notable men of this country and Europe to be entertained at the house on Main Street. The most remarkable assemblage being President Grant and his Cabinet, who spent the Sunday preceding our Centennial 19<sup>th</sup> of April there.

Miss Clara Hoar was now her mother's very capable assistant. Usually, among the maid-servants, there was a school-girl who did errands and light work outside of her school hours and learned sewing and the ways of a well-ordered household. Servants kept their places until removed by marriage or death, but even then there were difficulties to be met in providing for a large and varying family. One day, in speaking of housekeeping trials, Miss Clara Hoar told me that a distinguished Senator visiting them was asked if he would like anything before going to bed. He thought he might take a cup of *hot bouillon*, this being before the days of Beef Extracts and on a summer evening when the kitchen fire had been out for hours.

While Miss Beth Hoar (Mrs. Bowles)<sup>58</sup> was a young lady at home, there was much entertainment of the young people of the Town. Dances and game parties filled the big parlors, where Mrs. Hoar always had her chair in the corner by the fireside. Though not saying much, she was a serene and cheerful presence at the young people's merry-makings; stately, in her handsome dark silk and her white lace cap with lappets and pink bows, she was the quickest of us all in guessing charades. In small groups of her family and friends she would sometimes, with one fitting phrase, sum up and finish a matter under discussion.

Once when the people about her were planning in a rather extravagant way for the needs of the Hindoo widows, "I thought all the Hindoo widows needed was a little firewood!," she quietly remarked.

Her sympathy and discretion brought many people to her with their confidences. Sometimes both parties to a quarrel would tell their woes, and after the affair was over, both would remain her firm friends no matter what they thought of each other. This often gave her much silent amusement. People who served on committees with her always speak of her sense of humor and the quickness with which she saw any comical situation. This was a surprise to those who had only known her formally.

When some of us went to Mrs. Hoar in 1875 to beg her not to give up her Sunday School class, she said that the state of her health made it impossible for her to continue it. I think that a weakness of the heart began to be felt at that time and she could not bind herself to regular engagements.

Some years after this, a young lady coming to know Mrs. Hoar for the first time said that she seemed to her like the Priestess of some Oracle, apart from the hurry of life, always in the same place, surrounded by loving care and ready with wise counsel.

Those who came in contact with Mrs. Hoar were constantly amazed by her knowledge of all that went on in the world, for there was no apparent effort on her part to gather information. She read one or more newspapers daily and quietly formed decided opinions on politics, people and affairs. Her ideas on a wide range of subjects were always well-considered and worthy of attention, but rarely stated unless asked. She had a book of daily reading marked with the dates important to the family and friends, so that she was an authority often consulted as to ages and anniversaries.

In the leisure of her later life, reading was a solace for many hours as her eyes remained wonderfully strong.

Knitting took the place of sewing toward the end of her life, and of the young people about us, now in full vigor of manhood and womanhood, many had the first contact of their toes with this rough world softened and comforted by Mrs. Hoar's socks, delicate of texture and of intricate pattern.

The Concord of the eighties was as different from the Concord of Mrs. Hoar's girlhood as our Concord is from that. She took all changes calmly as the necessary progress of the world, and enjoyed driving about the Town to see what was being done. The man who has cared for the garden at Judge Hoar's for over thirty years tells me that Mrs. Hoar especially liked the Autumn foliage, and when he was taking her to drive, he would always stop for her to see it wherever it was unusually beautiful. He says that Concord has had many "fine ladies," but that Mrs. Hoar was "the finest of all," always so "calm and good."

In 1890, Judge and Mrs. Hoar celebrated their Golden Wedding. Miss Amelia Prichard and Mr. Fay Barrett again stood by the bride and groom, and an unusually large number of relatives and friends, who had been present at the marriage ceremony, came together after fifty years had passed.<sup>59</sup>

Mrs. Hoar lived for two years after the Golden Wedding, gently withdrawing more and more from active life. She died suddenly, July 14, 1892.

What she was to those nearest to her will perhaps be best told in a few sentences taken from a "Christian Register" Article, which, shortly after their

Mother's death, Miss Clara Hoar and Mrs. Bowles separately cut from the paper, for each other, both feeling that it expressed what they would like to say.

These sentences written by Miss Larned<sup>60</sup> in memory of a friend are as follows: "We turn our thoughts to one who made the ideal home, pervaded it, filled its every part like air and sunshine coming in at open windows, as unobtrusive as gentle. A spiritual attraction drew all to this centre. It was not what she said or did; it was what she was that inclined footsteps to her door. The secret of her help was not exuberance but stillness and rest. Even the dullest perception must have seen that her life was spiritual, based on unselfishness and charity. The purity of her face and the clearness of her eyes was a rebuke to all low motives. But no word of criticism fell from her lips. The good in each soul was always present to her perceptions. She drew no arbitrary lines between human beings; it was the soul that interested her. Hospitality to her was as sacred as the hearth altar to the ancients. If she had not money to give the mendicant she gave that something infinitely better, the touch of human kinship. But love and self-forgetfulness wear out the silver cord. It was fretted away silently without complaint."

What both Judge and Mrs. Hoar were to their friends and fellow townsmen has been well said by Miss Ellen Emerson in some verses written for their Golden Wedding.

"To dear Judge Hoar  
and  
to dear Mrs. Hoar  
on their *Golden Wedding Day*.

Since rhyme remains the nearest way  
Whereby the unsayable we say,  
Let one of many souls, that own  
The good this married pair have done,  
Endeavor faintly to express  
This happy town's indebtedness  
To him, whose wisdom still has made  
Our wisdom, whose warm heart has led  
In everything that drew us near  
As townsmen, and made Concord dear;  
To her, who silent and withdrawn,  
Yet kept considerate eyes upon  
Each need of all, and studied still  
What means might bring good out of ill,  
Till, coming forth a little space  
More openly, to serve her race,  
She laid the firm foundation well  
Of works that still the story tell.  
Of Mercy's impulse pure restrained,

While caution weighed what would be gained  
 By carrying out its prompted work,  
 Or what of harm might in it lurke;  
 And patient ingenuity  
 To ensure the first, the other flee,  
 Then to her privacy, too soon  
 Returned, feeling her part was done.  
 Be it with joy by every tongue confessed  
 That for these fifty years with wisdom clear  
 And earnest feeling, which has made them dear,  
 Have these two hearts for Concord thought,  
 Have these true hands for Concord wrought,  
 Today let Concord rise and call them blessed.”<sup>61</sup>

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## Notes

- 1 The approach that Mrs. Hudson describes proceeds left down Main Street from Lexington Road, toward the intersection of Main and Sudbury Road, where the Concord Free Public Library sits today. The “Church and Village Common” refers to what is now called Monument Square. The millpond, which was to the left of Main Street on the route traced here, extended lengthwise from Main to Heywood Street and widthwise from behind the First Parish on Lexington Road to Walden Street. It was drained in the mid-1820s by the Concord Mill Dam Company, a real estate development corporation.
- 2 The Block House stood at what is now the corner of Main Street and Keyes Road, next to the Main Street, or South, Burying Ground. It was moved to Lowell Road in the 1930s. Bigelow’s Tavern (no longer standing) was located just to the west of the Main Street Burying Ground. Shepherd’s Tavern (today Concord Academy’s Wheeler House, at #122 Main) was just down the street. *The Story of the Concord Academy Houses* by Ruth B. Drinker and Marie G. Eaton, published by the Academy in 1999, provides considerable information about the history of the Main Street buildings that currently belong to Concord Academy.
- 3 The Nathan Brooks House occupied the present site of the Concord Free Public Library. Moved in 1872 to make way for the Library, it now stands at #45 Hubbard Street.
- 4 The date of death of Caroline Downes Brooks is listed as March 29, 1820, in the printed Concord vital records.
- 5 The vital records give the date of marriage as July 3, 1823.
- 6 William, Frances, Moses, Elizabeth, and Amelia Prichard (born in 1814, 1816, 1818, 1822, and 1824) were the children of Moses and Jane Prichard. The family lived at what is now #140 Main Street (Concord Academy’s

Bradford House). Elizabeth Hallett Prichard became Mrs. Edward Sherman Hoar—Caroline Brooks Hoar’s sister-in-law—in 1859.

7 Elizabeth, Ebenezer Rockwood, Sarah, Edward Sherman, and George Frisbie Hoar (born in 1814, 1816, 1817, 1823, and 1826) were the children of Squire Samuel and Sarah Sherman Hoar. They made their home at the present #158 Main Street (Concord Academy’s Admadjaja House). Rockwood and Frisbie went on to distinguished careers in law and politics (Rockwood as a judge, United States Attorney General in the cabinet of Ulysses S. Grant, and a representative in the United States Congress, Frisbie as a representative and a senator in Congress). Rockwood married Caroline Brooks on November 20, 1840. Elizabeth was engaged to Emerson’s brother Charles and was an intimate of the Emerson household. Edward was a lifelong friend and a traveling companion of Thoreau.

8 William and Hannah Whiting and their children William, Anna Maria, and Louisa Jane (born in 1813, 1814, and 1820) lived at the corner of Main Street and Academy Lane (now #169 Main). The younger William was solicitor for the United States War Department during the Civil War.

9 The Thoreaus—parents John and Cynthia and children Helen, John, Henry, and Sophia (born in 1812, 1815, 1817, and 1819)—rented what is now #166 Main Street (Concord Academy’s Aloian House) from 1826 to 1827, then moved across the street to #185 Main, which they rented from 1827 to 1837.

10 Martha Lawrence Prescott was born in 1818 in Littleton, Massachusetts, to Timothy Prescott and his first wife Abigail. Martha’s half-sister Abigail was born in 1825 to Timothy and his second wife Maria King Prescott, her half-brother George Lincoln in 1829. The Prescotts moved to Concord in the early 1830s and lived on Monument Street. Martha became Mrs. John Shepard Keyes in 1844; Abba married George M. Brooks—half-brother of Caroline Brooks Hoar—in 1850. George Lincoln Prescott was a Concord Civil War hero and casualty. John Shepard, Joseph Boyden, and George Keyes were the sons of John and Ann Stow Shepard Keyes, Monument Square residents. John S. Keyes became a lawyer, a Massachusetts state senator, Sheriff of Middlesex County, a United States marshal, district court judge, and one of the most powerful men in Concord politics. The first five of the nine children of Dr. Josiah Bartlett and his wife Martha Tilden Bradford Bartlett (Lowell Road residents) were Martha (born 1824), Gorham (1826), James Walker (1828), Elizabeth (1830), and George Bradford (1832).

11 Although there appear to be no surviving images of Caroline Brooks Hoar, it is evident that she was lovely as a young woman. While banished by Harvard to Concord for several months before his 1838 graduation for his “continued neglect of his college duties,” James Russell Lowell was

sufficiently moved by Caroline Brooks's youthful beauty to write a poem about her. Beginning "A pair of black eyes . . .," the piece is included in Moorfield Storey's and Edward Waldo Emerson's *Ebenezer Rockwood Hoar: A Memoir* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1911), p. 31.

- 12 Nathan Brooks (1785-1863) began practicing law in Concord in 1813. His first office was on Lexington Road, his second (shared with Sam Hoar) at the edge of Concord Center, not far from the intersection of Main and Sudbury Road. In 1832, he moved across the street into the Concord Bank building (now #46/48 Main), where he worked until his death. The Second Series (1888) of *Memoirs of Members of the Social Circle in Concord* includes a biography of Nathan Brooks.
- 13 The location of Caroline Brooks's record of sermons is unknown. The Concord Free Public Library holds a similar volume kept by Caroline's half-brother George between 1835 and 1837 (Special Collections call number Vault A30, Unit B5). This record includes summaries of sermons by Hersey Goodwin, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Ezra Ripley, Samuel Ripley, Barzillai Frost, and others.
- 14 The old Concord Academy building, where Henry and John Thoreau kept school between 1838 and 1841, originally stood on Academy Lane. After Middle Street was laid out (1850-1851) between Academy Lane and what is now called Thoreau Street, the building was moved. It is the present #25 Middle Street. Among the approximately two hundred manuscript land and property surveys by Thoreau in the CFPL's Henry David Thoreau Papers (Vault A35, Thoreau, Unit 1), there are two surveys of the proposed Middle Street, one of them showing the former location of the Academy.
- 15 Caroline Brooks inherited from her mother, who died following childbirth. Nathan Brooks was appointed guardian of his daughter's inheritance during her minority. The extensive Nathan Brooks Papers in the Concord Free Public Library (Vault A45, Brooks, Unit 1) include materials documenting his guardianship.
- 16 One does, in fact, survive, in the CFPL collection of Concord Academy student compositions (Vault A85, Unit B1). "On Cruelty to Animals" was written by Caroline Brooks at the age of nine.
- 17 Phineas Allen graduated from Harvard in 1825, taught at the Concord Academy from 1827. His involvement in local anti-Masonic politics in 1834 ultimately led to his departure. In the town election that year, he prevailed over long-time incumbent Abiel Heywood (one of the founders of the Concord Academy) for the position of Town Clerk. The parents of a significant proportion of Allen's students were alienated and kept their children from school. In the summer of 1834, William Whiting (Harvard Class of 1833) was appointed to teach at the Academy. By 1836, Allen had left Concord.
- 18 John Shepard Keyes noted in his manuscript autobiography (in the John Shepard Keyes Papers in the CFPL, Vault A45, Keyes, Unit 2) that William

Whiting was succeeded in 1835 at the Academy by C.C. Shackford, first ranking scholar and class orator in Harvard's Class of 1835. Material provided by the Harvard University Archives indicates that Charles Chauncy Shackford (1815-1891) became a minister after teaching in Concord and then attending law school for a year. He became the head of a girls' school in Lynn, Massachusetts, in 1865 and a professor of rhetoric and literature at Cornell in 1871. At Cornell, he was a pioneer in the teaching of comparative literature. Shackford lectured at Alcott's Concord School of Philosophy in 1886 on the subject "Plato and the Sophists."

- 19 Although Caroline Brooks may initially have enjoyed Shackford's attentions, an October 12, 1836 letter from her to her stepmother (in the Nathan Brooks Papers, CFPL) reveals that she was eventually displeased by his persistent pursuit. She wrote of having "just got rid of Mr. C.C.S. forever."
- 20 Mary Merrick Brooks's father Tilly Merrick (1755-1836) was involved in the shipping firm of Merrick and Course in Charleston, South Carolina, where he lived from 1784 until 1798. In 1798, he returned to his native Concord. Tilly Merrick's brother Augustus (1759-1788) was also in business in South Carolina, where he died. The Nathan Brooks Papers in the CFPL include the business records (shipping trade materials from Charleston among them) of Tilly Merrick, Brooks's father-in-law.
- 21 It is clear from both the Merrick Papers in the CFPL and from Tilly Merrick's biography in the Second Series (1888) of *Memoirs of Members of the Social Circle in Concord* that Merrick adapted himself fully to the Southern economy while in Charleston. He was, in fact, a plantation- and a slave-owner.
- 22 Nathan Brooks's reticence openly to involve himself with antislavery activities is sometimes interpreted as a lack of sympathy with, even hostility to, the movement. I find no evidence that Brooks was unsupportive of his wife in her abolitionist leadership of Concord's women. There is documentation of Brooks's position in the fact that outspoken antislavery advocate and journalist William Stevens Robinson—a Whig, Free-Soiler, and Republican—promoted the Whig lawyer's ultimately unsuccessful 1839 run for the United States Congress. In her "Warrington" *Pen-Portraits*—an 1877 memoir of her husband—Mrs. Robinson referred to Nathan Brooks as an abolitionist. Moreover, the story of Brooks's human kindness to the fugitive slave Shadrach is well known. Nathan Brooks was a public figure at the town, county, and state levels. He served as treasurer of the Trustees of Town Donations in Concord, as master in chancery (a county-level position with jurisdiction in cases of insolvency), and as a member of the Governor's Council

(1829-1831). He was also secretary/treasurer of the Middlesex Mutual Fire Insurance Company, a director of the Concord Bank, and president of the Middlesex Institution for Savings. There is no question that as a representative of the law and a public figure, Brooks felt duty-bound to be circumspect about advocating disobedience to it, but it is equally clear where his sympathies lay on the slavery issue.

23 Keyes was at Harvard from 1837 to 1841.

24 Educator and environmentalist George Barrell Emerson (1797-1881) kept a Boston private school for young women from 1823 until 1855.

25 Caroline Brooks's narrative of what happened in Philadelphia may be compared with the full account of the history and destruction of Pennsylvania Hall as presented in detail in *History of Pennsylvania Hall, Which Was Destroyed by a Mob, on the 17<sup>th</sup> of May, 1838* (Philadelphia: Merrihew and Gunn, 1838). The CFPL owns Elizabeth Palmer Peabody's copy of the book.

26 Angelina Emily Grimké Weld (Mrs. Theodore Weld), Sarah Moore Grimké, Maria Weston Chapman (Mrs. Henry Grafton Chapman), and Abigail Kelley (later Mrs. Stephen Symonds Foster). *History of Pennsylvania Hall* includes a full account of the women's antislavery convention.

27 The quotation is from a letter written by Garrison to Sarah T. Benson (Mrs. George Benson), Boston, May 19, 1838. The letter is printed in *William Lloyd Garrison, 1805-1879: The Story of His Life, Told by His Children* (New York: Century, 1885), Volume 2, pp. 213-217. It is also included in *The Letters of William Lloyd Garrison* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1971-1981), Volume 2, pp. 362-364.

28 Data in the *Family Search* files ([www.familysearch.com/Eng/Search](http://www.familysearch.com/Eng/Search)) suggests that Caroline Downes Brooks Hoar was connected to the Grosvenors through her mother. About 1808, Lemuel Grosvenor of Boston married a Clarissa Downs in Boston. They had five children, including a Caroline Downs Grosvenor (born about 1819), all born in Pomfret, Connecticut. Clarissa Downs Grosvenor was likely related to—possibly a sister of—Caroline Downes Brooks (mother of Caroline Downes Brooks Hoar).

29 Ebenezer Rockwood Hoar, born in 1816, was four years older than Caroline Brooks. He died in 1895. The details of Judge Hoar's life are recorded in *Ebenezer Rockwood Hoar: A Memoir*, by Moorfield Storey and Edward Waldo Emerson (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1911) and in his biography by Edward Waldo Emerson in the Fourth Series (1909) of *Memoirs of Members of the Social Circle in Concord*. In 1999, Mrs. Virginia Hoar Frecha gave the CFPL an extensive collection of papers of five generations of the Hoar family (cataloged as Vault A45, Hoar, Unit 1), including rich documentation of the life of E.R. Hoar, particularly of

his political life as a Whig, Free-Soiler, and Republican. The finding aid for the Hoar Family Papers is mounted on the CFPL website ([www.concordnet.org](http://www.concordnet.org), then click to Library, then to Special Collections, then to Selected Finding Aids, then to Hoar Family Papers).

30 Barzillai Frost served the First Parish from 1837 until 1857. He initially assisted the aged Dr. Ezra Ripley, then became sole minister on Ripley's death in 1841. He holds the dubious distinction of having exasperated Emerson with the lifelessness of his sermons, inspiring critical comment in the "Divinity School Address" (1837).

31 Jonathan Fay Barrett (1817-1885), son of Joseph and Sophia Fay Barrett, was a schoolmate of E.R. Hoar's at the Concord Academy. He entered Harvard College in 1834 but left after a year to study law. He married Lydia Ann Loring (daughter of David Loring) in 1848. His biography in the Third Series of *Memoirs of Members of the Social Circle in Concord* (1907) was written by Hoar.

32 Since Barrett died in 1885, and the Hoars celebrated their fiftieth wedding anniversary in 1890, Mrs. Hudson is mistaken in this.

33 #166 Main Street (Concord Academy's Aloian House).

34 #194 Main (Concord Academy's Hobson House).

35 The children of Caroline Brooks Hoar were: Caroline (later Mrs. Samuel Bellows Greene), born 1842; Sarah Sherman, born May 13, 1844, died October 13 of the same year; Samuel, born 1845; Charles Emerson, born 1850; Clara Downes, born 1852; Elizabeth (later Mrs. Samuel Bowles), born 1854; and Sherman, born 1860. The wording of this sentence ("Of her seven living children ...") suggests that Caroline Hoar suffered miscarriage or stillbirth in addition to the live births here listed.

36 Mrs. Hudson likely here refers to her own loss in August of 1890 of her eighteen day old infant daughter Mary. In 1892, she also lost an eight month old son.

37 Clarissa Cutter was the daughter of Saunders and Clarissa Flint Cutter. Saunders Cutter died on 17 January 1822. On 16 December 1825, Mrs. Cutter married Monument Street farmer Daniel Hunt. Raised along with a large brood of children born to her mother and stepfather, Clarissa fared better than some in the family. According to an autobiographical memoir by her half-brother William Henry Hunt (quoted in his Social Circle biography, which was printed in 1940 in the Fifth Series of *Memoirs of Members of the Social Circle in Concord*), she lived in the Hoar household. Interestingly, although Daniel Hunt struggled to provide for his family and had few resources to devote to matters beyond subsistence, he was an ardent abolitionist. William Henry Hunt tentatively attributed his father's position on the issue to the influence of his half-sister, who absorbed antislavery sentiment from the Hoars and their associates. Clarissa Cutter

was also the half-sister of Martha Hunt, the Concord schoolteacher who, despairing over her prospects, drowned herself in the Concord River in July, 1845. (The search for her body was recorded by Nathaniel Hawthorne in his journal and adapted by him in his description of the search for Zenobia's body in *The Blithedale Romance*.) A second Hunt daughter also drowned herself near the spot where Martha died, and a third sister drowned accidentally. Clarissa Cutter at least enjoyed a stable situation in a comfortable home and was appreciated for her efforts. She died in Concord in 1879 at the age of fifty-nine.

38 Son of George Frisbie Hoar, nephew of Ebenezer Rockwood and Caroline Brooks Hoar. Rockwood Hoar was born in Worcester in 1855 and died in 1906.

39 George Brooks's second wife, Mary A. Dillingham Brooks. His first wife, Abba Maria Wood Prescott (a daughter of Timothy and Maria King Prescott), died in 1851 after little more than a year of marriage.

40 George Merrick Brooks (1824-1893) was a lawyer, a Massachusetts representative and senator, a member of the United States House of Representatives, a probate judge for Middlesex County, a Concord selectman, and treasurer of the Concord Free Public Library Corporation. His biography by J.S. Keyes is printed in the Third Series of *Memoirs of Members of the Social Circle in Concord* (1907). The Nathan Brooks Papers in the CFPL include George Brooks material. An oil portrait of him hangs in the CFPL Reference Room. Contrary to Mrs. Hudson's chronology, Judge Hoar's trip to Europe (1847) did not coincide with the birth of Charles Emerson Hoar (1850).

41 Spring to fall, 1860.

42 Concord Academy's Phelps House East (#204 Main Street), the east half of the double house at #204-206 Main. Mr. Buttrick was Stedman Buttrick (1864-1925).

43 Dr. Josiah Bartlett (1796-1878) practiced medicine in Concord for fifty-seven years, from 1820 until his death early in January of 1878. In 1821, he married Martha Tilden Bradford (daughter of Gamaliel Bradford), with whom he had nine children. The CFPL holds several collections of Bartlett papers including material relating to Josiah Bartlett. The Concord Museum owns his account books (currently deposited in the CFPL). A biographical sketch of Bartlett by Grindall Reynolds is printed in the Second Series of *Memoirs of Members of the Social Circle in Concord* (1888).

44 The Concord Soldiers' Aid Society was formed in 1861 to provide articles of clothing, food, personal comfort, convenience, and entertainment to soldiers fighting the Civil War. Originally organized to supply the needs of soldiers in the Concord Artillery, by 1862 the Society was preparing boxes of goods to benefit all soldiers served by the United States Sanitary Commission. Meetings were held at first in Town Hall and the First Parish vestry, later in the engine house near the train depot. The membership

included individuals from many families, among them Alcott, Bartlett, Brooks, Brown, Bull, Cheney, Damon, Emerson, Gerrish, Gourgass, Hoar, Hosmer, Keyes, Prescott, Reynolds, Richardson, Sanborn, and Warren. The CFPL holds the manuscript records of the Concord Soldiers' Aid Society from 1861 to 1865 (Vault A75, Con.Sol., Unit 1).

45 Eager to take part in the Civil War, Samuel Hoar (1845-1904) enlisted in a Maine regiment in 1862 without parental consent. E.R. Hoar had him transferred to Company E of the 48<sup>th</sup> Regiment of Massachusetts Volunteer Militia, which left Massachusetts for New York on December 27, 1862, moved on to New Orleans, and, after several months of camp duty in Baton Rouge, was involved in the attack on Port Hudson (surrendered July 8, 1863). Samuel Hoar took part in active fighting, conducting himself honorably. He kept a diary and wrote detailed letters home, recording both his military experiences and his observations on the local landscape and people. He became ill in July of 1863, was sent home in August, and mustered out early in September. His Civil War letters home are part of the Hoar Family Papers in the CFPL. His Civil War diary is in private hands. A biographical sketch of Hoar by Woodward Hudson is included in the Fourth Series of *Memoirs of Members of the Social Circle in Concord* (1909).

46 According to Lincoln historian Margaret M. Martin, the house, which stood on the Old Concord Road in Lincoln, burned in 1928. Thoreau surveyed the Edward Sherman Hoar property in 1860. His draft survey of it is in the CFPL's Henry David Thoreau Papers.

47 The Concord Female Charitable Society was founded in 1814 to provide aid to the local needy in the form of clothing, provisions, and sometimes money, and to encourage their religious and moral development. Members met regularly to make clothing and to discuss the distribution of charity. Meetings also afforded the opportunity to socialize. The Society changed its name to the Concord Friendly Aid Society in 1942, and became the Concord Family Service Society in 1954. Mrs. Hoar joined the Society in 1856. She served as its president and in other capacities. Mrs. William Wheeler was its president in 1909, when Bessie Keyes Hudson delivered her speech on Mrs. Hoar before the Women's Parish Association. The CFPL holds the records of the Concord Female Charitable Society (Vault A75, Con. Fem., Unit 1).

48 Mrs. Lydia Reed was probably the Lydia Reed listed in the federal censuses of 1850 (age given as fifty) and 1860 (age sixty). (Another woman of the same name died in Concord in 1852 at the age of sixty-nine.) Mrs. Cyrus Hosmer was Lydia Wheeler Hosmer, who died in Concord in 1884 at the age of eighty-three. Mrs. Nathan Brooks was, of course, Mary Merrick Brooks (1801-1868), Caroline Hoar's stepmother. Sarah A. Stow, daughter

of Nathan and Mary Barrett Stow, died at seventy-five in 1900.

49 Zilpah White (as her name is recorded in the Concord record of her death on April 16, 1820, at age eighty-two) is the Zilpha referred to by Thoreau in his journal and in *Walden*.

50 Materials in the CFPL suggest that Hannah More's writings were popular with the Thoreau family. In 1801, John Thoreau (Henry's grandfather) donated More's *Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education* to the Charitable Library Society of Concord, a predecessor of the CFPL. The Thoreau Books section of the Concord Authors Collection includes a volume of More's *Practical Piety* bearing the autograph of Jane Thoreau, Henry Thoreau's aunt. As a member and officer of the Concord Female Charitable Society, perhaps Cynthia Thoreau influenced the organization in its choice of "light literature" by this moral and religious writer.

51 Mr. and Mrs. Hoar were both active members of the First Parish, the records of which are found in two separate collections in the CFPL.

52 Caroline and E.R. Hoar appear to have shared a similar attitude toward religious doctrine and ritual. Edward Waldo Emerson wrote in his Social Circle biography of E.R. Hoar (p. 42): "Belief in the one God, faith in a future life, homage to the beautiful life and teachings of Jesus, justice, mercy, and love to his fellow-men,—these were in his religion. We do not know how far his critical mind allowed him to go in minor points of belief. These were enough, and were active forces in his life."

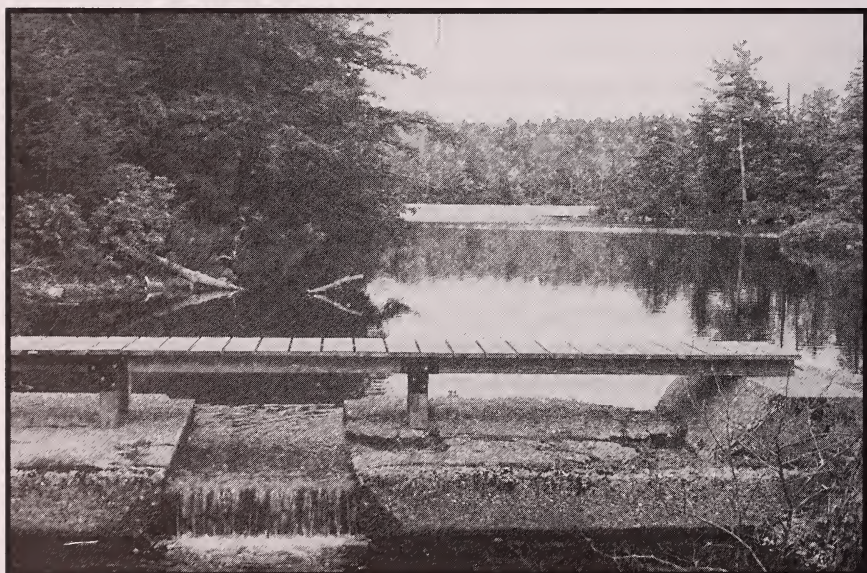
53 Fannie Eleanor Hubbard Wheeler (1853-1942).

54 As documented in the *Annual Report of the School Committee of Concord, Massachusetts for the Year 1893-94* (p. 8), sewing was introduced into the Concord grammar schools not long after Mrs. Hoar's death. Miss Ella Whiting was the first sewing teacher in the town's public schools.

55 Caroline Hoar was president of the Women's Parish Association from 1881 to 1884. Bessie Keyes Hudson prepared a fiftieth anniversary history of the WPA in 1931 (typescript available in the records deposited by the First Parish in the CFPL Special Collections). Mrs. Hudson reported the founding of the WPA as follows: "In the spring of 1881, a small, representative group of women met by invitation at the house of Mrs. E.R. Hoar on Main Street. ... [Mrs. Hoar] said it was becoming the custom in many churches of our denomination, as women were more and more coming into public life, for an association of women to be formed to undertake certain duties of the parish, such as social occasions, housecleaning, the care of buildings and furniture, which were a suitable field for women's work. As the new addition to our church ... would need furnishing and care, perhaps it was an especially appropriate time for such an organization to be formed. The group assembled was in favor

of this plan and a meeting for organization was held in the Vestry of the First Parish April 20, 1881. This new field of work for women did not meet with universal approval. Some women dreaded such an incursion into man's domain."

- 56 In his *Houses, & Owners or Occupants in Concord, 1885* (available in the CFPL in manuscript form and also in a typescript version including later updates by Adams Tolman and Marian B. Miller), John Shepard Keyes wrote tartly of a "Coffee House under the auspices of some kind of Association for Parish purposes. Of course it was a failure." I have been unable to discover the precise dates of operation of Mrs. Hoar's "Coffee Room." The Wright Tavern was donated by E.R. Hoar and Reuben N. Rice to the First Parish in 1886.
- 57 E.R. Hoar was Attorney General in Grant's cabinet from 1869 to 1870.
- 58 Elizabeth Hoar married Samuel Bowles (1851-1915) on June 12, 1884. Editor of the *Springfield Republican*, Bowles inherited his involvement in the paper from his father and grandfather. His father Samuel Bowles (1826-1878) was the close friend of Amherst poet Emily Dickinson.
- 59 As noted above, Mrs. Hudson appears to be wrong about J. Fay Barrett's presence at the fiftieth anniversary party of Mr. and Mrs. Hoar (see endnotes 31 and 32).
- 60 Newspaper correspondent and author Augusta Larned (1835-1924) was a contributor of many stories, poems, and other pieces to a variety of periodicals. "The Silver Cord"—her obituary of Mrs. Hoar, remarkable for its emphasis upon its subject's generosity, character, and spirituality and at the same time for its conspicuous failure specifically to name her—appeared in Boston's *The Christian Register* 71.30 (July 28, 1892), p. 472 (available on microfilm in the Boston Public Library).
- 61 The Hoar Family Papers in the CFPL include another (unattributed) manuscript verse clearly written for the golden anniversary of Caroline and Ebenezer Rockwood Hoar.



**Two Views of Guilder Pond**  
*Photos by Bernard Drew*

# *Thoreau's Tarn Identified: Guilder Pond*

**Bernard A. Drew**

Henry David Thoreau, as he sawed boards and hammered nails to frame his remote cabin in Concord in 1845, couldn't shake from his head a vivid recollection of a small mountain pond he had seen the summer before, "a tarn high up on the side of a mountain, its bottom far above the surface of other lakes," as he described it in *Walden*.<sup>1</sup>

That inspirational pond, which has long eluded identification, is most likely Guilder Pond in the town of Mount Washington, Massachusetts. Part of Mount Everett Reservation, the irregularly shaped pond is today surrounded by gently sloping, mostly coniferous forest. Rounded ledge protrudes from the shore. Water dribbles over a concrete spillway into Guilder Brook. A hiking trail encircles the pond.<sup>2</sup> There is no distant view from Guilder Pond; looking in any direction but the southwest (where towers Mount Everett), it seems to hover near the clouds. No wonder the tarn stuck in Thoreau's mind. Like Walden's shore, its shore is "so low in the woods that the opposite shore, half a mile off, like the rest, covered with wood, was my most distant horizon."<sup>3</sup>

Thoreau scrambled to the peak of Saddleback (Mount Greylock) in northern Berkshire County, Massachusetts, in mid-July 1844. He spent a cold night pathetically blanketed by planks near the observation tower at the peak — he gives an account in his first book (*A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers*, 1849). His friend William Ellery Channing II joined Thoreau in Pittsfield, and they went on to Kaaterskill Falls in the Catskills. Most scholars are unaware of or overlook<sup>4</sup> Thoreau and Channing's return, which came through South Berkshire and took in not only the region's most dramatic waterfall, Bash Bish, but also Guilder Pond and Mount Everett.

An exception is J. Parker Huber, who edited *Elevating Ourselves: Henry David Thoreau on Mountains*.<sup>5</sup> In three annotative sentences at the end of a summary of the 1844 trip, he ventures: "Thoreau and Channing returned via Bash Bish Falls in southwestern Massachusetts, again over the Berkshires and

through the villages of Mount Washington and Chester. Likely they passed, and at least viewed, Monument Mountain, in the towns of Stockbridge and Great Barrington, the meeting place of Melville and Hawthorne on 5 August 1850. At Chester they took the railroad east, arriving in Concord on August 1.”

Huber subsequently amplified: “As to Thoreau’s passage thru the southern Berkshires we know all too little alas.... There’s no Thoreau journal, at least none discovered yet, of this trek. The primary source for this is notes William Ellery Channing, who was with Thoreau at this point, made in [the] margin of his copy of Thoreau’s *A Week*, which is in [the] Berg Collection of [the New York] Public Library....”<sup>6</sup>

Let’s reconstruct Thoreau and Channing’s trek through South Berkshire. The two likely traveled from Hudson, New York, to Claverack and Hillsdale, then turned south, arriving at Copake Falls. While Thoreau often hiked in a straight course, regardless of terrain, by now he had been afoot some two weeks and one suspects would in deference to his mate have followed well-traveled roads. The route could have been accomplished in a day. Elaine Goodale Eastman, writing of her 1870s childhood in Mount Washington, described her godfather, who was “a great walker, and once saw the sun rise from a summit in the Catskills and set from our Taconic Dome.”<sup>7</sup>

What exactly did Channing say about the trip? Thomas Woodson in 1975 brought Channing’s notation to light: “Met H. in the morning after he had left this observatory [at Greylock] at the Pittsfield R.R. depot. He had no shirt-collar perceptible, carried a small leather wallet belonging to the late Charles Emerson on his back and looked as if he had slept out in the fields, as he was unshaven & drest very poorly. From hence, we proceeded to Albany, the Catskills, Bashapish falls, Mt. Washington to Chester factories on the Western R. riding home in the 2nd class car, walking the other part of the way.”<sup>8</sup> Woodson found two obscure mentions in Thoreau’s own writings of “Bashpish”<sup>9</sup> to confirm Channing’s recollection: one in *A Week*, one in *A Yankee in Canada* (1866).

Edward Hitchcock (1793-1864) preceded Thoreau to Bash Bish Falls when he conducted an official geological survey of Massachusetts from 1837 to 1839. The Amherst College professor (later president) found Bash Bish unexpectedly: “Although the most remarkable and interesting gorge and cascade in Massachusetts, it was only by accident that I learnt their existence, after having been in Mount Washington some time; and at that time I could scarcely find anyone in the neighboring towns who had heard of the spot....”<sup>10</sup> Observing how little known was Mount Washington’s scenery (which “would almost repay a lover of nature for a voyage across the Atlantic”), Hitchcock went on:

It is an enterprise of no small magnitude to get to the spot; especially for ladies, none of whom but the most resolute and

vigorous should attempt it, until the roads are improved, or rather made, for the main difficulty is there are no roads that are tolerable for carriages within two miles of the place. A few years since there was a very decent road from Copake in New York, it being only four miles east of Miller's tavern. But the powerful rains of the summer of 1838 completely ruined it, so that it will be quite as easy to make a new one as to repair the old one. The best course to reach this spot is to go into Mount Washington from Egremont.

Hitchcock concluded, "The town [Mount Washington] contains an unusual amount of objects of scenographical interest. To examine the most important, two days, at least, are indispensable: one to ascend Mount Everett, and the other to explore the scenery of Bash-Bish Falls. To one who has a taste for the wild, the romantic and the grand in nature, these two days will be a season of delightful emotions."

Thoreau read Hitchcock's survey<sup>11</sup> and was apparently charmed by the description. Whether he also chanced on Stockbridge author Catherine M. Sedgwick's timely article "Berkshire's Early Beauties" in *Graham's* magazine,<sup>12</sup> which appeared the same month as this walk, hasn't been verified.<sup>13</sup> Woodson speculates that Channing, who had visited members of the Sedgwick family in Lenox in the late 1830s, through them became familiar with Bash Bish Falls and suggested a visit to Thoreau.

A second, bracketing description of Bash Bish Falls was written two years after Thoreau's visit. Albert Nash of Falls Village, Connecticut, in the company of his wife and two friends made an excursion to Mount Washington's two natural sites — Bash Bish Falls and Mount Everett — Sept. 16, 1846, and he wrote an account for the short-lived Great Barrington weekly, *The Housatonic Mirror*.<sup>14</sup> Nash's party entered Mount Washington from the south, ascending by Salisbury's Mount Riga ironworks. Opposite the house of one Schutt,

we left the road, travelling in the fields in our carriages, in a south westerly direction one mile, where we again resumed our way on foot. After descending a steep hill through a forest about three fourths of a mile in the same direction, we reached the stream which forms the falls. On the east bank of this stream stands a comfortable dwelling in perhaps one of the most romantic places occupied by a house in this or any other state. Upon this house the sun may shine from five to seven hours in twenty-four. While descending the hill, we saw the good lady of the house going out to do the milking for the evening. It was then 3 o'clock, p.m. On descending, however, we found

sundown before we reached the place; although to a person on Mount Everett the sun would not set in less than three and a half hours afterward. After crossing the stream west of the house we followed a narrow winding foot path through bushes a few rods, and found ourselves entering the gorge.... This opening may be some fifteen or twenty rods wide at the bottom. On each side —north and south, the mountains rise in a sloping direction from two or three thousand feet. With the exception of the gorge below, this is probably the lowest point of land in Mount Washington. This is however several hundred feet higher than Copake flats, lying directly west; making, of course, a steep descent toward the west. In the bottom of this natural gorge is another, formed by an immense fissure or crack in the mountain. This lower gorge varies in width from about twelve feet to three rods and in depth from fifteen to three hundred feet. Extending into it on both sides are strata of rock, covered on the top with trees and bushes. From several of these, fine views may be had of the regions below. From one on the south side, we had a view of the bottom of the gorge, which appeared nearly three hundred feet below us.

The bottom of this enormous chasm is covered with huge masses of rock which have fallen from its sides, with the trunks of decaying trees floated down in time of freshets, which, together with the foaming water, now dashing down in this direction, then in another, here turned aside by a strain of rock and there divided into rivulets by masses thrown into the middle of the gorge, form a scene for wildness and grandeur scarcely surpassed. This is *the* gorge, the ravine above scarcely being remembered or noticed.

Hitchcock characterized the western side of Mount Washington as ruggedly forested, but it was already beginning to change by the time of Nash's visit, though Nash didn't take notice. Lemuel Pomeroy and his sons of Pittsfield, Massachusetts, in 1845 constructed an iron blast furnace and erected dwellings in Copake which, according to a town history, "were surrounded by a complete wilderness, neither house, nor railroad being in existence."<sup>15</sup> With the furnace soon producing about 2,500 tons of pig iron a year, there grew a huge appetite for charcoal, and the mountain was soon webbed with crude roads to reach outdoor charcoal hearths which consumed a huge quantity of trees. Thoreau witnessed Bash Bish just before this assault. The terrain immediately around the



**Bash Bish Falls**  
*Photo by Bernard Drew*

falls enjoyed a certain natural protection and today is part of Bash Bish State Park, created in 1924<sup>16</sup> and made more accessible by the Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1930s.<sup>17</sup>

Thoreau and Channing passed a handful of hardscrabble Dutch or English farmsteads<sup>18</sup> in 1844 as they climbed to Mount Everett — perhaps they stopped to bargain for a loaf of fresh bread.

Following present-day roads up the mountain (Bash Bish Falls Road to West Street then north, crossing at Hatch Hill Road to East Road and going south to the present entrance road to Mount Everett Reservation), the distance is 6.75 miles.<sup>19</sup> That stretch might have been shaved some if the walkers had paced a crow's route to Mount Everett. While taking West Road south to Cross Road then north on East Road would be closer, Cross Road apparently didn't exist in 1844. Both Hitchcock in 1839 and Nash in 1846 state distinctly that they left their carriages at the Schutt residence (on West Road) and descended by a trail the approximately three miles remaining to Bash Bish Falls. The predecessor to the modern paved road likely was constructed to provide access to the mountains for charcoalers serving the Copake furnace.<sup>20</sup>

It will take further research to determine if Thoreau and Channing came to Guilder Pond by the present state forest access road (which was improved in this century to serve early automobilers) or some other woods road.<sup>21</sup> The road to the pond is mentioned in an account of the first fire tower being wrestled to the top of Mount Everett in about 1910, “drawn by team up the old wood road through the Blueberry Hill property by W. H. Weaver. This ribbon of a road through the lovely laurel skirts of the mountain had been used by charcoalers and later by carriages of sightseers and summer boarders from all over the county. The road ended just above Guilder Pond.”<sup>22</sup>

Woodson points out that Thoreau, writing in his journal years later on May 1, 1851, again recalled thinking about this mountain lake before he built his cabin:

I had in my mind's eye a silent gray tarn which I had seen the summer before high up the side of a mountain, Bald Mountain, where the half-dead spruce trees stood far in the water draped with wreathy mist as with usnea moss, made of dew, where the mountain spirit bathed; whose bottom was high above the surface of other lakes. Spruces whose dead limbs were more in harmony with the mists which draped them.<sup>23</sup>

Woodson was baffled by the reference to Bald Mountain; he could find none in the Catskills, “nor, as far as I can determine, at any other place Thoreau is likely

to have visited in July 1844.” Woodson didn’t know how close he was to solving this little riddle. As Albert Nash writes in 1846, “We call it [the highest peak in Mount Washington] Mount Everett because that is the name given it by Mr. Hitchcock.... This peak is however more generally know[n] by the name of Ball, or Bald mountain....”<sup>24</sup>

The follically sensitive Hitchcock in his *Final Report on the Geology of Massachusetts* said there were too many Bald mountains in Massachusetts, and “besides, who is willing that so splendid a mountain as this, should bear so untasteful a name. In many respects this mountain is the finest in Massachusetts.... It deserves.... a name that will connect it with the literature and history of Massachusetts. Such a name I trust all without distinction of political party.... will acknowledge our present Chief Magistrate to be.”<sup>25</sup> He referred to Edward Everett, governor of Massachusetts from 1836-40, later president of Harvard and U.S. secretary of state and senator.<sup>26</sup>

Nash related how his group found Mount Everett — or Bald Mountain:

It will require in a reader but a small share of the preserving exertion necessary for the actual ascent. Let it suffice to say, we left the road, turning into the fields east, opposite the house of Esq. Smith, and after ascending in a rough wood and wooden path about a mile, we reached a log house, now forsaken and decaying. Here we left our horses and carriages, the remainder of the ascent being necessarily on foot. The path conducting the ascent turns east some three or four rods south of the old house— is only a narrow foot path, and would hardly be noticed by a stranger. From this place we found the ascent steep and difficult. After passing through a section of bushes, then one of light timber, and lastly one of shrub pines, we at last reached the summit.

What a prospect! In a moment our labor was forgotten in the splendid scenery presenting itself on every side. Mountains, hills, plains, forests, cultivated fields, dwellings, villages, churches, streams and lakes scattered in magic variety and beauty over the whole scene. The Catskills bound the view on the west, although points further west are visible at both ends of that range — On the north, one or two points of land in Vermont may be seen. The view on the east is supposed, in one place, to extend beyond the Connecticut river; and on the south to extend from forty to fifty miles.

Guilder Pond was named for an early Dutch settler near Copake, who was briefly captured by Indians when he ventured up the mountain. He is said to have later become friendly with the native inhabitants and married an Indian

woman. At 2,042 feet, the pond, as Thoreau observed, certainly has a bottom higher than the tops of any other lakes or ponds in Berkshire, if not Massachusetts — save one.<sup>27</sup>

Guilder Pond and the nearby summit are part of Mount Everett Reservation, which was created in 1908 when the state acquired the “Dome of the Taconics” from Orrin C. Whitbeck and the estate of Laura C. Culver. Two years later the Mount Everett Reservation Commission took by eminent domain additional land from Elizabeth P. McNaughton including Guilder Pond.<sup>28</sup> The Commonwealth of Massachusetts after establishing Mount Everett Reservation continued to add adjacent acreage until by 1938 the property — which was managed by Berkshire County government — totaled 1,089 acres. The state took over operation of the reservation in 1974. You can visit there today and walk a trail which circuits the pond, though you must park at the gate and climb the mountain road to reach the site.<sup>29</sup>

Guilder Pond, you’ll find, not only sits high among the clouds, it has a true “Bald Mt.” beside it, and it has beneath its surface the remains of aged tree stumps, the remains of those trees once “draped in wreathy mist.” Surely it is Thoreau’s tarn.

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## Notes

- 1 Philip Van Doren Stern, *The Annotated Walden* (New York: Clarkson N. Potter, 1970), 218.
- 2 F.M. Lane, *Trail Map of Mt. Everett June 1932* (Mount Washington: Mt. Everett Reservation Commission, 1950) and *Mt. Washington State Forest Trail Map* (Massachusetts Department of Environmental Management, 1996). Walter Prichard Eaton (1878-1957) of Sheffield, Massachusetts, a writer and college professor, made the trail in the 1920s with the help of boys from Berkshire School.
- 3 *Annotated Walden*, op cit.
- 4 The map of Thoreau’s travels in Stern’s *Annotated Walden*, 304, omits any recognition of a South Berkshire leg, for example.
- 5 Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1999, 26-27.
- 6 Letter to the author, Thanksgiving 1999.
- 7 Typescript, “Little Sister to the Sioux,” Eastman-Goodale-Dayton Papers, Sophia Smith Collection at Smith College, Northampton, Mass., III: 3, quoted with permission of Sophia Smith Collection and Cynthia W. Risk.
- 8 “Thoreau’s Excursion in the Berkshires and Catskills,” *ESQ*, second quarter 1975, 82-92. Richard Nunley in *The Berkshire Reader: Writings from New England’s Secluded Paradise* (Stockbridge: Berkshire House,

1992), 123, and William Howarth in *Thoreau in the Mountains* (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1982), 80, also mention but without elaboration the Channing notation discovered by Woodson.

9 Variant spellings include “Bash-Bishe” (Catharine M. Sedgwick, *Graham’s* magazine, July 1844) and “Beeshes Piss” (Hudson River patrolman Robert Livingston, diary, 1714).

10 *Final Report on the Geology of Massachusetts* (Amherst: J.S. & C. Adams, 1841), 288-293.

11 Robert Sattelmeyer, *Thoreau’s Reading: A Study in Intellectual History with Bibliographical Catalogue* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1988), 233-234, verifies Thoreau had a copy on his own bookshelf.

12 Reprinted in *Berkshire Courier*, Great Barrington, Mass., 23 July 1891.

13 Sattelmeyer doesn’t list it nor does Raymond R. Borst, *The Thoreau Log: A Documentary Life of Henry David Thoreau 1817-1862* (New York: G.K. Hall, 1992).

14 “Berkshire Scenery: Mount Washington,” *Housatonic Mirror*, 28 October 1846, 1. The friends were the Rev. and Mrs. D.W. Clark of Salisbury, Conn.

15 Dorothy D. Saums, editor, *A History of the Roeliff Jansen Area* (Columbia County, N.Y: Roeliff Jansen Historical Society, 1990), 29.

16 Southern Berkshire Registry of Deeds, Book 238 Page 225, 3 November 1924, original acquisition of seven parcels, 388 acres, from Ella R.K. Masters for \$5,254.

17 “Bash Bish Falls Wildest Scene South of the ‘North Country,’” *Berkshire Eagle*, 1935, undated clipping in newspaper’s archive.

18 According to H.F. Keith’s “Town of Mount Washington” in *History of Berkshire County*, Massachusetts (New York: J.B. Beers, 1885), 227, and Evelyn Shearn’s *A History of Mount Washington, Massachusetts* (Mount Washington: Shearn, 1976), 4, the town may have been settled by the Dutch as early as 1692.

19 Motor trip 27 March 2000.

20 It shows up on Henry F. Walling’s 1858 wall map of Berkshire County, published by Smith, Gallup & Co., Boston.

21 According to Mount Washington resident Eleanor Tillinghast in a conversation 14 October 2001, there is an old road which ascends to Guilder Pond from behind Blueberry Hill farm on East Road.

22 Morgan Bulkeley, “Biography of a Mountain,” *Berkshire Eagle*, 28 April 1960.

23 Hilary Russell, who teaches a course in Thoreau at Berkshire School in Sheffield, Massachusetts, read an early draft of this essay and questioned

Thoreau's mention of spruce trees in the 1851 journal entry found by Woodson (conversations 24 July and 4 August 2000). There are Eastern hemlocks but no spruces on Mount Everett, said Russell, who has frequently canoed Guilder Pond. Thoreau wrote this particular entry seven years after the 1844 visit, and apparently without benefit of a journal to refresh his memory. In a variant version of *Walden* cited by Woodson, Thoreau doesn't specify the tree species. He writes of "dead willows and bare firs that stood here and there in the water." (See next footnote.) The standing stumpage in both Thoreau descriptions would have fit fifteen-acre Guilder Pond, which is an impoundment which enlarged a much smaller natural pond, created for waterpower a few years before Thoreau's visit. Trees were flooded as the result of the pond's creation. Well downstream from the outlet there were at least two sawmills which operated in the 1800s. There is no known illustrative evidence of the existence of standing dead trees near Guilder Pond. Still, this writer has seen below-surface tree stumps there and Russell's wife Jenny, who also has canoed Guilder Pond, verified she has seen such stumps (conversation 28 March 2001). Charles W.G. Smith, author of *Water Trails of Western Massachusetts* (Boston: Appalachian Mountain Club, 2001), includes Guilder Pond among his suggested paddling sites. Smith said there are definitely below-water stumps on the pond's south side. "The shore close to the Mount Everett side is all boggy," he said. "It is not technically a bog, but there are peat moss and sundew, signs of an acidic environment. There are stumps off shore 10 feet covered in peat moss; they could be 160 years old." (Conversation 27 April 2001.)

- 24 Another contender for the inspirational tarn is South Lake in the Catskills. According to W. Barksdale Maynard (*Art Bulletin*, 81:2 [June 1999], 303-325):

Equally exciting and portentous for Thoreau was South Lake, less than a half a mile to the east. Along with neighboring, smaller North Lake (with which it is today conjoined), its situation is unusual — it sits tarnlike on the mountainous Pine Orchard plateau that soars, with the abruptness of the Acropolis, 1,600 feet above the Hudson River valley (Fig. 24). Distinctive were the numerous dead trees around its shoreline, the irregularity of which held irresistible charm for countless Picturesque-minded tourists, including Thomas Cole (1801-1848), who had inaugurated his career as a painter with *Lake with Dead Trees* (Catskill) in 1825, and Willis, who with artist William H. Barlett (1809-1854) had featured those same trees in a chapter on "The

Two Lakes and the Mountain House on the Catskills” in his 1840 *American Scenery* (Fig. 25). Thoreau was doubtless struck by South Lake’s similarity in size to Walden Pond — both are just over half a mile long — and conceivably it was while standing on its shores that he first appreciated the poetic possibilities that might unfold if he settled beside Walden. It is known for certain that within a few months, his traveling companion Channing was encouraging him to do so, as if they had discussed the matter previously.

It seems that this dual encounter with rustic Scribner’s and the nearby South Lake was crucial for Thoreau in formulating the Walden experiment of the following summer, when he would attempt to bring the Catskills’ potent spirit of wildness home to Concord. As we have seen, his first, revealing thoughts on opening his journal at Walden were of the 1844 trip and its mountain houses. ‘The pond was like a mountain lake I had seen,’ he later observed, and he would recall in 1851 that when he came to live at Walden, “I had in my mind’s eye a silent grey tarn which I had seen the summer before” high up the side of a mt Bald Mt where the half dead spruce trees stood far in the water draped with wreathy mist.... Whose bottom was high above the surface of other lakes.” “Bald Mt.,” perhaps a recollection of the ledges above North lake (Fig. 24), has been interpreted as a reference to his trip to Mount Katahdin, in Maine (1846), but this possibility is obviated by ‘the summer before’ and ‘the half dead spruce trees,’ which point to South Lake. The latter identification becomes certain when the passage is compared with Thoreau’s telling journal entry from his fourth day of living at Walden:

There are strange affinities in this universe — strange ties stranger harmonies and relationships, what kin am I to some wildest pond among the mountains — high up one[']s shaggy side — in the gray morning twilight draped with mist — suspended in low wreathes from the dead willows and bare firs that stand here and there in the water... where in some angle of the hills the woods meet the water[']s edge and a grey tarn lies sleeping.

With its dead trees, this is certainly South Lake remembered from the previous summer, bound in Thoreau’s mind in mystical kinship and affinity to Walden.

Maynard offers in evidence an undated etching of a winter scene which shows dead conifers along the shore. In rebuttal, there certainly were plenty of ponds and lakes in the 1840s surrounded by dead trees, Guilder Pond among them. Maynard can only suggest Thoreau's "Bald Mt" was "perhaps a recollection of the ledges above North Lake," whereas Mount Everett in western Massachusetts was irrefutably called Bald Mountain for many years and bears that designation on published maps.

- 25 Hitchcock, 238.
- 26 Everett (1794-1865) spoke at Gettysburg 19 November 1863 for the dedication of a national battlefield cemetery there, but his talk was greatly overshadowed by that of Abraham Lincoln.
- 27 Nine-acre Berry Pond in Pittsfield State Forest with an elevation of 2,070 feet is the highest. It is a natural pond. James A. McCann and Leo M. Daly, *An Inventory of the Ponds, Lakes and Reservoirs of Massachusetts: Berkshire and Franklin Counties* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Water Resource Research Center, circa 1970), 48.
- 28 "Mount Everett Reservation Started with 493 Acres from Whitbeck-Culver Tracts," *Berkshire Courier*, 26 June 1958.
- 29 Robert T. Leverett, who has researched old-growth forests, in conversation 14 October 2001 said there is a stand of more than twenty acres on the peak of Mt. Everett of wind-dwarfed pitch pine. And on the north shore of Guilder Pond there is a small grove of old Eastern hemlock, some of them more than 250 years old. See James Gorman, "Centuries-Old Trees, the Ones the Loggers Overlooked or Didn't Want," *New York Times*, 5 October 2001.

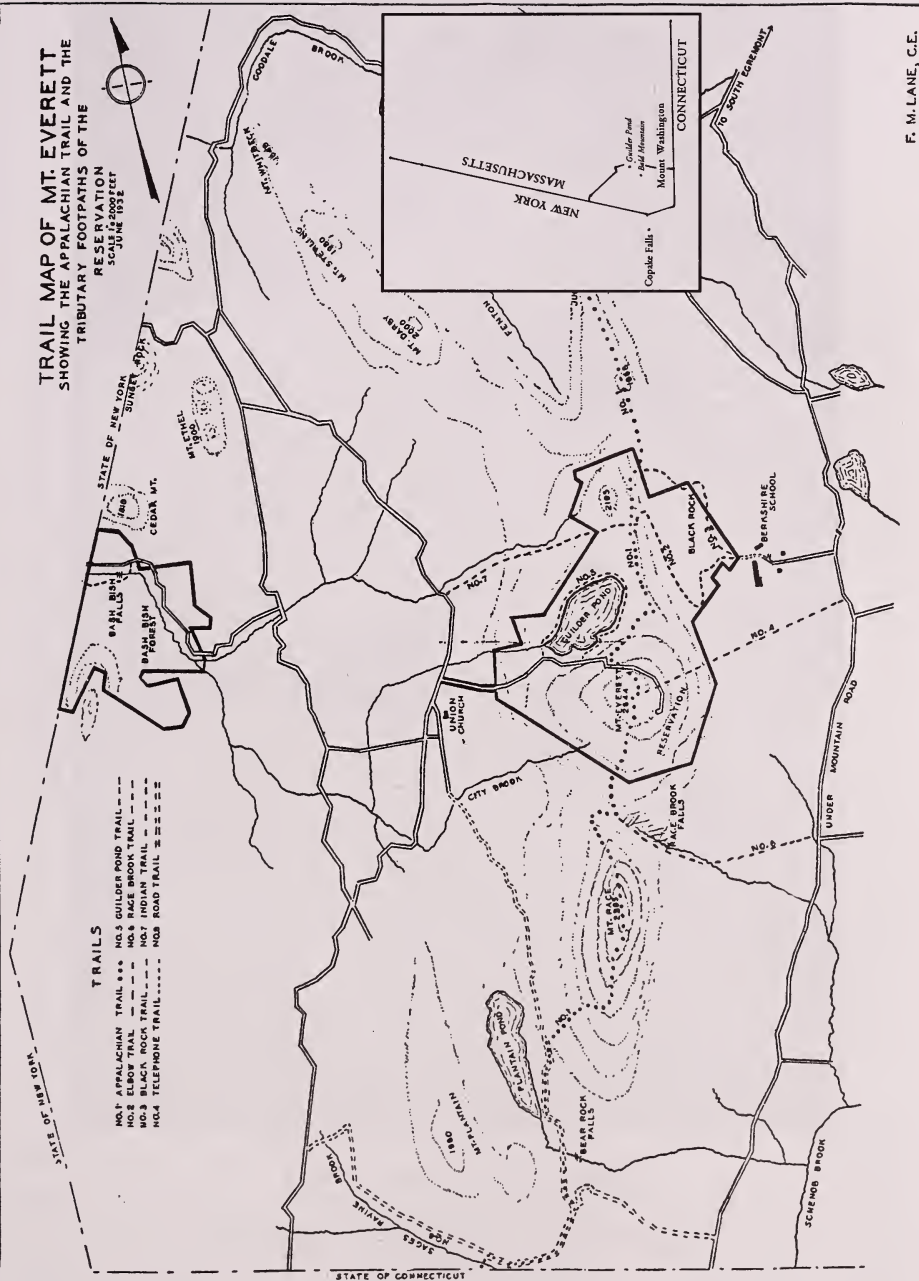
# TRAIL MAP OF MT. EVERETT SHOWING THE APPALACHIAN TRAIL AND THE TRIBUTARY FOOTPATHS OF THE RESERVATION

SCALE 1:2000 FEET  
JUNE 1952



## TRAILS

- NO. 1 APPALACHIAN TRAIL ---
- NO. 2 GILDER POND TRAIL ---
- NO. 3 ELBOW TRAIL ---
- NO. 4 BLACK ROCK TRAIL ---
- NO. 5 INDIAN TRAIL ---
- NO. 6 TELEPHONE TRAIL ---
- NO. 7 ROAD TRAIL ---





**Kate Field with a hat and bag**

(Ms. KF. Vol. 8, page 805D)

Boston Public Library/Rare Books Department.

*Courtesy of the Trustees.*

# *Kate Field on Thoreau*

**Gary Scharnhorst**

Though overshadowed by such early Thoreau enthusiasts as Ellery Channing and Frank Sanborn, Kate Field (1838-1896) nevertheless deserves to be remembered for promoting Thoreau's writings and a pair of causes associated with him: the memorialization of John Brown and the preservation of wilderness. Though virtually unknown today, Field was a forerunner of such famous turn-of-the-century women journalists as Nellie Bly. She was "one of the best-known women in America" at the height of her fame, according to her obituary in the *New York Tribune*,<sup>1</sup> and she published an estimated three thousand articles during her career. A member of the expatriate community in Florence in the late 1850s, she befriended the Brownings, the Trollopes, Walter Savage Landor, Harriet Hosmer, Charlotte Cushman, and George Eliot while she was still in short dresses. One of the first women to contribute to the *Atlantic Monthly*, a well-known lecturer, a prolific travel writer and theatre reviewer for the *New York Herald* and the *Tribune*, and a member of the Radical Club of Boston, she was also, I believe, the model for the character of Henrietta Stackpole in Henry James' novel *The Portrait of a Lady*. Field first won renown for her dispatches to the *Tribune* about Charles Dickens' final American tour in 1867-68, and she later revised these dispatches into a popular book, *Pen Photographs of Charles Dickens's Readings* (1868). She also published two popular travel books, *Hap-Hazard* (1873) and *Ten Days in Spain* (1875); she briefly acted the part of Laura Hawkins in Mark Twain's play *The Gilded Age* in 1875; she worked as a publicist for Alexander Graham Bell in the late 1870s, once even singing Irish folk songs over the telephone to Queen Victoria; and she helped to found the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre in Stratford in 1879. Between 1890 and 1895, moreover, she edited and published her own weekly paper, *Kate Field's Washington*, to which the young Charlotte Perkins Stetson (Gilman) contributed thirty of her earliest poems, stories, and essays. More to the point, Field read Thoreau avidly, if not too well, throughout her life.

Field was likely introduced to Thoreau's writings by his publisher and her friend, James T. Fields (no relation). In a history of the firm of Ticknor & Fields that she wrote for the *Springfield Republican* in late 1868, she briefly described "Thoreau's connection" with the firm from Fields' point of view, albeit with significant omissions. "Having published 'A Week on the Concord River' at his own risk," she explained, "the book failed to attract attention, and bearing off the entire edition, he packed it away in Concord. Ticknor & Fields offered to take the edition, an offer that Thoreau accepted, and the sale of this condemned book

led to the issue of all his works.”<sup>2</sup> Not only did Field mistitle Thoreau’s first book, but she failed to mention *Walden*, which Ticknor & Fields had published in August 1854 prior to their reissue of *A Week*. Still, Field was apparently intrigued by Thoreau’s writings, and over the next few months she read *Excursions*, *Letters to Various Persons*, *Walden*, *The Maine Woods*, and *AYankee in Canada with Anti-Slavery and Reform Papers*.

Inspired especially by *Walden*, the essay “Walking,” and *The Maine Woods*, it seems, she spent four weeks in July 1869 camping in the Adirondacks with friends. She consulted *The Maine Woods* while packing for the trip,<sup>3</sup> for example, and the so-called “Black Fly Club” slept one night in a cabin in the woods inhabited by Sidney Hay, son of a local judge, who “from early Spring until early Winter” lived there “after Thoreau’s own heart.” Young Hay modeled his life in the Adirondacks after Thoreau’s experiment at Walden Pond, she joked, save for “his devotion to *THE TRIBUNE*” (for which she was reporting her summer in the woods). The Concord philosopher had “fulminated” in “one of his bulls,” as she noted, “Let not your life be taken by newspapers.” Her allusion here is probably to Thoreau’s admonition to Harrison G. O. Blake in a letter dated 9 August 1850: “Do not read the newspapers.” This letter had appeared in Emerson’s edition of Thoreau’s *Letters to Various Persons* (1865).<sup>4</sup>

Field’s experiment in self-reliance in the summer of 1869, as tame or restrained as it may seem in retrospect, soon became the topic of her lecture “Out in the Woods” or “Among the Adirondacks.” She delivered this lecture dozens of times between October 1869 and January 1871, including dates in Boston, New York, Brooklyn, Newark, Buffalo, Providence, Chicago, and Detroit. She cited Thoreau several times in the version of the lecture she published in the *Atlantic Almanac* for 1870 under the title “In and Out of the Woods.” “Thoreau is right in asserting,” she began, “that ‘what you seek in vain for, half your life, one day you come full upon, all the family at dinner. You seek it like a dream, and as soon as you find it you become its prey.’” (48). The quotation appears in Emerson’s eulogy at Thoreau’s grave, first published in the *Atlantic* in August 1862 and reprinted the next year as the introduction to *Excursions*.<sup>5</sup> In addition, Field quoted passages from Thoreau’s “Walking,” also collected in *Excursions*, that have been appropriated in recent years by environmentalists (e.g., “Life consists with wildness. The most alive is the wildest.... Dulness is but another name for tameness” [“In and Out of the Woods,” 52]). The overall tone of her lecture, too, was heavily indebted to Thoreau’s nature writing, as in the following excerpt:

Day after day we float along with only woods and waters for companions, listening to the songs of invisible birds, serenaded by a wondrous chorus of bullfrogs, startled by the strange cry of the loon, who shakes his head defiantly and then disappears for so long a time that I unconsciously hold my breath for him and wonder whether he ever intends to come up again. We listen to the croaking of the raven, and the tapping of the woodpecker that seems to be knocking at some inhospitable door. Yonder soars an eagle, and farther on flit two sea-gulls that have come

into the mountains for a change of air and scene. ("In and Out of the Woods," 50)

Not surprisingly, reviewers of Field's lecture sometimes even compared her to Thoreau; e.g., her humor was "quaint and fresh enough for Thoreau," and she exhibited a "Thoreauian sympathy with Nature."<sup>6</sup>

Field ended her lecture, significantly enough, with a paean to John Brown and an appeal to preserve his farm and gravesite near North Elba in the Adirondacks:

I could not leave the North Woods without making a pilgrimage to John Brown's grave. Standing beside that, plucking roses and buttercups that sprang from the giant's heart, I saw the entire history of our terrible civil war.... John Brown's scaffold, six feet high, twelve feet wide, fifteen feet long? It is as high as heaven, as wide as the universe, as long as time; its lessons will endure throughout eternity.<sup>7</sup>

Field would have read a similar passage in Thoreau's essay "A Plea for Captain John Brown," which had appeared in *A Yankee in Canada with Anti-Slavery and Reform Papers* (1866): "Some eighteen hundred years ago Christ was crucified; this morning, perchance, Captain Brown was hung. These are the two ends of a chain which is not without its links. He is not Old Brown any longer; he is an angel of light."<sup>8</sup> Certainly Field was familiar with Thoreau's "enthusiastic defence of John Brown, by speech and writing," as she later put it--"a good work, in which he surpassed the most ardent Abolitionists of New England."<sup>9</sup> She soon raised two thousand dollars in subscriptions to purchase Brown's farm, where his widow continued to live to the end of her life. The site was eventually donated to the federal government by the private foundation Field established. "I wanted the farm to be held as sacred ground, as proof that even in the nineteenth century there is such a thing as poetic justice," she later reflected. "I wanted it to be the centre of a great National Park."<sup>10</sup>

Field joined the staff of the London *Examiner* in January 1877 and contributed book and drama reviews and occasional essays to its pages for over a year. Most of her articles in the *Examiner* appeared without signature, but it seems likely that Field wrote the review of *Thoreau: His Life and Aims* by H. A. Page (aka A. H. Japp) printed in the 29 December 1877 issue of the paper. This reviewer praised Emerson's biographical sketch of Thoreau, "one of the most characteristic and valuable of its author's writings," "so highly valued by all students of Thoreau, and absolutely essential to their conception of the man." She allowed how Thoreau was a "stoic philosopher," "descriptive writer," and "naturalist," whose "three streams of thought ran parallel." His "hatred of newspapers" was legend. Much as Field had compared Thoreau to Walt Whitman in passing in her Adirondacks lecture, moreover, this reviewer asserted that Whitman was, "to an extent unsuspected, the wayward scholar of Thoreau." Still, Page failed to produce "a very satisfactory book. His volume is a mosaic of passages from the works of Thoreau and from those of his biographers, framed in a rhapsody of Mr. Page's own."<sup>11</sup>

A decade later, Field joined the campaign to establish Yosemite National Park. Her decision was largely influenced by the nature writings of Emerson and Thoreau, whom she declared “the prophet of the American woods,”<sup>12</sup> and such contemporary naturalists as Clarence King and John Muir. As she wrote Mary Mapes Dodge in 1890, “I’m out gunning for Yosemite and am making converts.”<sup>13</sup> After she toured Yosemite valley in January 1892, she recommended that it become part and parcel of the National Park, and be under the control of the National Government: “When I visited the valley much of it was enclosed by hideous, cruel, barbed-wire fences. Those fences remain. I couldn’t walk. There were no foot paths. Turning forest and azalea bowers into wired hay fields is an outrage against Nature. Cutting down trees promiscuously and leaving an army of stumps is murder.”<sup>14</sup>

Revising her old Adirondacks lecture for publication in her weekly paper later the same year, she again quoted lines from Thoreau’s “Walking” (“Life consists with wildness. The most alive is the wildest.... Dulness is but another name for tameness”) and she added a long passage from the second chapter of *Walden*:

I was much affected by the faint hum of a mosquito making its invisible and unimaginable tour through my apartment at earliest dawn, when I was sitting with door and windows open, as I could be by any trumpet that ever sang of fame. It was Homer’s requiem; itself an Iliad and Odyssey in the air, singing its own wrath and wanderings. There was something cosmical about it: a standing advertisement, till forbidden, of the everlasting vigor and fertility of the world. (“An Adirondack Camp,” 115-116)

Field also published an open letter in her weekly paper to Leland Stanford, U.S. Senator from California, in which she quoted Emerson’s praise for the Yosemite. “As a semi-Californian,” she concluded. “I appeal to you to rescue God’s noblest work from the hands of vandals.”<sup>15</sup> Robert Underwood Johnson, editor of *Century*, wrote her that the letter was “*admirable* and will prove effective.”<sup>16</sup> Two days after it appeared, in fact, the *New York Times* commended her “vigorous protest” against the “neglect of the Yosemite.”<sup>17</sup> Field later bragged that she had helped save the valley, “whose millions of acres is one of the grandest of reservations” (“California as I Saw It,” 29). By her own testimony, much like her campaign to preserve John Brown’s farm a generation before, her efforts on behalf of Yosemite National Park were inspired by the works of Henry David Thoreau.<sup>18</sup>

In the midst of a canon reformation that has rehabilitated the reputations of dozens of forgotten or neglected literary figures over the past generation, Kate Field deserves to be resurrected from the footnote. While she wrote no formal autobiography and no full-length biography of her has appeared since 1900, as one of the first celebrity journalists she both reported news and gossip and was the subject of news and gossip. The significance of Field’s advocacy of causes associated with Thoreau and her familiarity with his writings should not be minimized, however unremembered her name. Travel writer, art and drama critic, playwright, lecturer, actor, publicist, dress reformer, environmentalist, editor--Kate Field enjoyed as many lives as Thoreau hoped to lead after his departure from Walden Pond.

## Notes

- 1 "Kate Field Dead," *New York Tribune*, 31 May 1896, 7:5.
- 2 "A New Old Firm," *Springfield Republican*, 14 December 1868, 2:4.
- 3 "In and Out of the Woods," *Atlantic Almanac 1870* (Boston: Fields, Osgood, 1869), p. 51. This annual was published in early November 1869; it was excerpted in the *San Francisco Evening Bulletin*, 13 November 1869, 3:4.
- 4 "Notes from the Adirondacks," *New York Tribune*, 3 September 1869, 2:3; *Letters to Various Persons* (Boston: Ticknor & Fields, 1865), p. 64. Field quoted the same maxim in "Notes from the United States," *Athenaeum*, 25 July 1874, p. 112.
- 5 Emerson, *Lectures and Biographical Sketches* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1883), p. 471. Field paraphrased the same maxim in "An Amusement Critique," *New York Tribune*, 29 April 1873, 2:2.
- 6 "Kate Field's Conversation," *Springfield Republican*, 18 November 1869, 4:2; "The Lecture of Miss Kate Field," *Buffalo Courier*, 12 January 1870, 2:3.
- 7 "Among the Adirondacks," *Chicago Tribune*, 8 February 1870, 4:3.
- 8 "A Plea for Captain John Brown," in *Reform Papers*, ed. Wendell Glick (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1973), p. 137.
- 9 "Literature: Thoreau," *Examiner*, 29 December 1877, p. 1647.
- 10 "John Brown's Grave and Farm," *Kate Field's Washington*, 13 January 1892, p. 17.
- 11 "Literature: Thoreau," pp. 1646-48. Field had discussed Whitman more fully in an unsigned article from London the year before ("London Literary Gossip," *New York Herald*, 17 April 1876, 3:5-6).
- 12 "An Adirondack Camp," *Kate Field's Washington*, 24 August 1892, p. 116.
- 13 *Kate Field: Selected Letters*, ed. Carolyn J. Moss (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois UP, 1996), p. 210.
- 14 "California as I Saw It," *San Francisco Examiner* special issue, 4 June 1893, p. 29.
- 15 "Vandalism in Yosemite Valley," *Kate Field's Washington*, 12 February 1890, p. 105.
- 16 Lilian Whiting, *Kate Field: A Record* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1900), p. 474.
- 17 *New York Times*, 14 February 1890, 4:5.
- 18 For the record, Whiting in her biography of Field (p. 320) asserted that she had inscribed in her notebook a paragraph about friendship from Thoreau's writings. However, I have been unable to locate this passage in Thoreau's *oeuvre*. It is apparently a meditation inspired by Thoreau, probably his apostrophe to friendship in the "Wednesday" chapter of *A Week*.



**Edwin Way Teale**  
*Photo Courtesy of Nellie Teale.*

# *Kindred Spirits: Edwin Way Teale and Henry David Thoreau*

**Thomas A. Potter**

Recently the Thoreau Society celebrated the one-hundred-fiftieth anniversary of the publication of Henry David Thoreau's *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers* in 1849. On September 2, 1939, on the one-hundredth anniversary of Henry and John Thoreau's actual expedition down those rivers, Edwin and Nellie Teale started on their own trek, leaving Concord and following the route by car that the brothers had taken by boat. As had Thoreau, Teale kept a set of notes about this experience.

During this quest for greater insight into the mind of Thoreau, Teale experienced some unanticipated thoughts as he and Nellie followed the Thoreaus' now famous excursion. Concluding their river drive, as Edwin and Nellie retraced their path that early autumn of 1939, he wrote in *The Lost Woods*,

I pulled into a filling station for gasoline. A radio was shattering the Sabbath quiet, raucous with direful news. Germany had invaded Poland. Warsaw was being bombed. French troops were on the move. The British parliament was sitting in extraordinary session. War with Germany was certain. The attendant who filled my tank was a young man in his early twenties. He was silent and preoccupied. The brazen voice of the loud speaker was altering his whole world while minutes ticked away. He had graduated from college, he told me, and hoped to get married. He was taking care of his father's gasoline station just for the day. When I paid him, he hurried away, grave-faced, already lost in the words of the news announcer.

Teale continued, "We spoke but a few sentences that morning. I have never seen him again. I don't know his name. Yet, often he has been in my mind, and his face, like a striking countenance seen under a street lamp, has returned many times in memory.... Although we were strangers before and strangers we have

remained since,... I have often wondered about his fate in the years that followed."<sup>1</sup> The image that Teale brought back from the Concord and Merrimack tour of the young man at the gasoline station was a cryptic reference to all that had weighed on his mind regarding the fate of his son David.

Several years later, in 1945, when the Teales finally received word of David's death in the war, Teale turned to a passage from Maurice Maeterlinck's essay "The Pre-destined": "They are known to most men, and there are few mothers who have not seen them. Perhaps they are as inevitable as life's sorrows; and the men among whom they dwell become the better for the knowledge of them, and the sadder, and the more gentle.... Their stay among us is often so short that we are unconscious of their presence; they go away without saying a word, and are forever unknown to us. But others there are who linger for a moment, who look at us with an eager smile, and seem to be on the point of confessing that they know all; and then towards their twentieth year, they leave us, hurriedly, muffling their footsteps, as though they had just discovered that they had chosen the wrong dwelling-place, and had been about to pass their lives among men whom they did not know."<sup>2</sup>

This passage is reminiscent of Teale's journal accounts in which he describes how he and Nellie had watched David disappear in a maze of uniforms and early morning fog at the railroad station, never to be seen again. David was off to Great Britain on his way to the front—and to his death. Eventually, just as Thoreau's brother John was memorialized in *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers*, so David Teale was memorialized in the dedication to Edwin Teale's season books. In dedicating their books to lost loved ones, both Teale and Thoreau imply a connection between nature and personal human experience which pervades their writing. This study of Edwin Way Teale, 1899-1980, the fourth president of the Thoreau Society, examines the influence of Henry Thoreau on Teale's love of nature and on his critique of the human condition.

Although Teale was known primarily as an excellent nature writer, he was also a great writer in a much broader context, but he buried a good deal of his social commentary in his notebooks and daybooks. Reading Teale's works carefully, particularly his later pieces, one can catch glimpses of his deeper social consciousness. Likewise, as Thoreau was early mistaken by many as primarily a nature writer, over the years the power of his metaphors as they addressed the human condition became evident. And although Teale greatly admired Thoreau for his social commentary, he was not able to express his personal views as openly as did Thoreau. He chose instead to have Thoreau speak for him, as when Teale edited *Walden: or Life in the Woods*<sup>3</sup> in 1946 and later produced a collection of Thoreau's comments in 1962, titled *The Thoughts of Thoreau*.<sup>4</sup>

Examples of Teale's more personal observations and expressions are found in a collection of unpublished notes he titled "Street Thoughts."<sup>5</sup> He wrote most of these comments in the years 1940 and 1941 as he daily traveled the train from Baldwin, Long Island, to his office at *Popular Science Monthly* in New York City. As had Thoreau, Teale penned numerous commentaries about his perception of the human condition. Of those overly zealous to reform our

condition, Teale writes, "When the average preacher finishes describing Heaven, he leaves me feeling more than ever glad I am still alive" (ST, Jan. 19, 1941). This excerpt brings to mind Henry's comments: "If I knew for a certainty that a man was coming to my house with the conscious design of doing me good, I would run for my life..."<sup>6</sup> One senses Thoreau's influence when Teale writes of living a meaningful life, "A great problem of life is how to avoid playing somebody else's game and how to play our own...How to avoid dying without ever having lived at all" (ST, Jan. 25, 1941). Thoreau's version reads, "I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived" (W, 90). Elsewhere Teale comments on the stress involved in our search for meaning: "How infinitesimal a fraction of the people you see in a railway coach are unhaunted by a cloud of worries and apprehensions—buzzing within their brains like a cloud of gnats" (ST, Jan. 29, 1941). Thoreau wrote, "The masses of men lead lives of quiet desperation" (W, 8). Like Thoreau, Teale also often expresses dissent from conventional wisdom: in commenting on a commonly held social attitude Teale notes, "Nothing in this universe 'has always been that way'" (ST, Feb. 10, 1941). Thoreau's earlier and more lengthy interpretation reads, "The fathers and mothers of the town would rather hear the young man or young woman at their tables express reverence for some old statement of truth than utter a direct revelation themselves. They don't want any prophets born into their families."<sup>7</sup>

These examples of social commentary in his unpublished notes demonstrate Teale's reluctance to express publicly his social criticism. The roots of that restraint are suggested in his notebooks about his childhood. He tells how his mother repressed disagreement and argument during his early years so that on the surface his home was a constant harmony. Edwin's mother wished for him to be an emissary of peace. This repression set the stage on the one hand for his private musings and on the other for his admiration for those who spoke out. A late example of this posture is seen in his copy of Edward Abbey's *Desert Solitaire*, which Edwin heavily underlined. Although he admired Abbey's courage to speak about important social and environmental issues, Teale's conservative side was troubled at times by Abbey's hostility.

As a young boy, while away from his restrictive home environment, Teale found an alternative form of nurture in nature. He refers to his days out-of-doors and at the farm of his grandparents in Furnessville, Indiana, as times of healing and inspiration. His childhood experiences at home in Joliet, Illinois, produced the quiet, private, almost secretive man, while his days at Lone Oak Farm with the surrounding natural world were his therapy. His grandfather and grandmother gave him the freedom to explore both the world about him and his inner thoughts.

Teale told his grandparents that he wanted to be a writer. And he wrote his first piece at the farm when he was but nine years old. He titled this initial effort, all of twenty-five chapters, *Lone Oak Days*. It has yet to be published. Like Teale, Thoreau was also writing as a young boy. At eleven he wrote these opening poetic lines as an introduction to an essay he titled, "The Seasons,"

Why do seasons change? And why  
Does Winter's stormy brow appear?  
Is it the word of him on high,  
Who rules the changing varied year.<sup>8</sup>

During his early years as a writer, Teale worked at *Popular Science Monthly*, where he wrote many feature articles on a broad range of subjects. While there he wrote his first two books, *The Book of Gliders* in 1930 and *Grassroot Jungles* in 1937. It was from his position at *Popular Science* that he launched his free-lance career on October 15, 1941—his Independence Day, as it would become noted again and again over the years in his diaries. Teale frequently compares this break to Henry's move to Walden on Independence Day in 1845. And like Teale, Thoreau published some of his early writings in the magazines of his day. Eventually both Teale and Thoreau became successful authors whose works were translated into numerous languages. Thoreau has the definite edge—*Walden* having been translated into more languages than any other piece of American literature. Both men recorded notes in the field and then transcribed them into their journals. Teale left forty diaries, and Thoreau left forty journals. They both left other volumes as well. Teale wrote nine volumes titled *Adventures in Making a Living* and four bound volumes of typed notes for his books on the seasons. He also kept nature notes in large ledger books. Thoreau left his volumes on native Americans and many notes on plant succession and wild fruits, both only recently edited and published by Bradley P. Dean.

Thoreau had Walden and Teale created one. At Trail Wood in Hampton, Connecticut, using the same dimensions as Thoreau's hut, Teale had a writing cabin constructed that overlooked his excavated version of Walden Pond. Teale measured the cases that Thoreau had built to hold his journals. Teale then proceeded to make the same for his works, which still sit on the lower west shelf of his study at Trail Wood. Early in their careers, each had a place of refuge. Teale had his insect garden in Baldwin, New York, a small urban plot that he had rented in order to study and photograph insects and to retreat to for reflection and solitude; Thoreau had the woods, ponds, and rivers that surrounded Concord. Teale went to Trail Wood to seek seclusion and to write, while Thoreau "went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately" and also to write (W, 90). Here is a difference between the men. Teale wrote of Trail Wood that he felt home at last and that a warm glow characterized his life there. But Thoreau moved back to town "for as good a reason as I went there" (W, 323).

Both Teale and Thoreau used visual techniques to interpret their visions of the natural world that they observed at Trail Wood, Walden Pond, or elsewhere. Here Teale surpasses Thoreau. Teale became an accomplished photographer, the results of which were to be an important source of income during the years soon after leaving *Popular Science*. His photographs appeared in many national magazines, textbooks, and encyclopedias. He also had photographic exhibits at the Eastman/Rochester House, the American Museum of Natural History, and at the National Audubon Society Center in New York City. In addition, he was elected a Fellow in the prestigious Royal Society for Photography in London. In contrast, Thoreau's journal sketches represented humble attempts at creating images that would help him recall his visions of nature.

Teale's writing career spanned forty years with thirty-one separate titles, some being anthologies and edited works. But in almost every instance Thoreau is present either by name or by influence. Teale's eloquent writing brought him many awards over the years, including the Burroughs Medal for *Near Horizons* in 1943 and the Pulitzer Prize in 1966 for *Wandering Through Winter*, the first nature book to have received such an honor.

With Thoreau becoming an ever more present influence on Teale's life and writings, it was inevitable that Edwin would tackle a larger Thoreau project. It was with the encouragement of Walter Harding, longtime secretary of the Thoreau Society, that Teale edited a new edition of *Walden* for Dodd, Mead and Company and later, *The Thoughts of Thoreau*. Shortly thereafter, in 1966 Walter Harding published *The Days of Henry Thoreau*. These works became a great source of Thoreau reference materials for those eager to learn about him and his views. These publications helped to create a bond between Teale and Harding that would last the rest of their lives. Teale last visited Concord in June of 1980 to help with one of Harding's Summer Thoreau workshops. Teale did not make the annual meeting later that year, for this former president of the society was dying of cancer.

Harding described to me (July 1991) his inclusion of Teale in the dedication of *The Days of Henry Thoreau*: As he and Teale started their usual early Saturday morning canoe trip while attending the annual meeting of the Thoreau Society, Harding stepped into the canoe and handed Teale the first copy of the book with the dedication reading,

For  
Martin Luther King, Jr.  
and  
Edwin Way Teale,  
*who although they lead widely disparate lives have  
both found inspiration in Henry David Thoreau*

Until then, Teale was unaware of this dedication and was deeply moved by it.

Harding and Teale had earlier become close friends, meeting for the first time in New York City in 1943 when the meeting of the Thoreau Society was held there due to travel restrictions during the war. Harding told me that they took to one another like “ducks took to water.” He said that in some respects he was more like a son to Teale, being closer in age to Teale’s son, David, than to Teale himself. Harding was twenty-seven and Teale forty-four at the time.

Teale’s life had been long and productive. During his late years he had hoped to write an autobiography but opted instead to take readers for a walk around Trail Wood to share with them those precious moments that he and Nellie had recorded over the years. Readers at last would be allowed to “saunter” though his world with ample time to return again and again. For them he wrote *A Walk Through the Year*.

Of Thoreau, Teale wrote, “Few men of accomplishment have enjoyed so wide a margin of leisure in their lives as Henry Thoreau. Few have had the supreme courage and self-confidence to walk, as he did, alone. The world has had to take him on his own terms. That it has is indicated by the fact that in New York City, on May 6, 1962, a century to a day after his death, his bust was unveiled at the Hall of Fame for Great Americans.”<sup>9</sup>

Of Edwin Way Teale, Paul O. Williams in his 1978 address to the annual gathering of Thoreauvians on the subject of nature writing stated,

When we reach the writing of a naturalist like Edwin Way Teale, we find the influence of Thoreau acquires a new dimension. I think we can say that no nature essayist has known the writing of Thoreau, especially the journal, with the intimacy that Teale does. Not only has his wife, Nellie, read him the entire text of the journal aloud, but also Teale has read the journal through twice more and edited his favorite selections from Thoreau for *The Thoughts of Thoreau*. Thoreau seems to creep into almost every Teale volume, including *The Strange Lives of Familiar Insects*.

In referring to other great naturalists, Williams noted that “...it is to Thoreau that he [Teale] returns most frequently.”<sup>10</sup> Williams compares Teale’s and Thoreau’s writing:

Both men have rich literary resources which find their way into their nature essays. Both have an inability to resist an amusing story. Both are highly conscious literary stylists in a type of writing which, in general, one too often encounters merely [a] plodding exposition. Both men feel and convey their interior leap of joy at some observation or perception, giving their feel for the natural world a lyric and emotive thrust.

Both have that careful and dogged patience which enables them to outwait the slow processes that they are observing—to stay there until something happens and to see it....

Both writers give specific descriptions, as for example of bird song, but both add the sense of the lift of spirit the observation brought....” Williams continued, “What we get in each case is what Teale has called ‘that emotional feeling.’ It is an inner emotional response that cannot be counterfeited” (Williams, 3).

Like Thoreau, Teale sometimes feared that nature was endangered, but both ultimately remained confident in its regenerative power. Teale expressed this confidence in his final remarks in his marvelous book, *A Walk Through the Year*:

Nearly two decades have passed since we first came to Trail Wood.... We have followed our trails through all the seasons with enjoyment unabated. We have found what Emerson found on the outskirts of Concord. “When I bought my farm,” he observes in his journal, “I did not know what a bargain I had in the bluebirds, bobolinks and thrushes; as little did I know what sublime mornings and sunsets I was buying.”...As I come to these final sentences, I sit here wondering if the time will ever come when such a book as this will seem like a letter from another world. Will the richness of the natural world be overrun and more and more replaced with a plastic artificial, substitute? The threat is real. And the outcome seems to depend on the wisdom and courage and endurance of those who are on the side of life—the original, natural life, the life of the fragile, yet strong, out-of-doors.

The walks of our year are over. But merely a dawn away they will begin again. For sometime during the hours of darkness the unending sequence of the seasons will bring another spring. Always the other spring.<sup>11</sup>

Thoreau would have quietly added, “...there is more day to dawn” (W, 333).

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## Notes

- 1 Teale, Edwin Way. *The Lost Woods: Adventures of A Naturalist* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1945), 90.
- 2 Maeterlinck, Maurice. “The Pre-destined,” in *The Treasure of the Humble* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1912), 45-47.

- 3 Thoreau, Henry D. *Walden*. ed. Edwin Way Teale (New York, Dodd, Mead & Company, 1946).
- 4 Teale, Edwin Way. *The Thoughts of Thoreau: Selected with a Biographical Forward and Introduction by Edwin Way Teale* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1962).
- 5 Teale, Edwin Way. Unpublished journal titled, "Street Thoughts" (Storrs, CT: University of Connecticut, Thomas J. Dodd Research Center, Edwin Way Teale Collection). Subsequent references to this work are cited in the text as ST and date.
- 6 Thoreau, Henry D. *Walden*. Edited by J. Lyndon Shanley. (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press), 74. Subsequent references to *Walden* are cited in the text as W.
- 7 Thoreau, Henry D. "Journal," in *The Writings of Henry David Thoreau*, 20 vols., (Boston: Houghton Mifflin and Company, 1906), 3:119.
- 8 Harding, Walter. *The Days of Henry Thoreau: A Biography* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc, 1982), 27.
- 9 Teale, *Thoughts of Thoreau*. viii
- 10 Williams, Paul O. "The Influence of Thoreau on the American Nature Essay," *The Thoreau Society Bulletin* 145 (1978), 3.
- 11 Teale, Edwin Way. *A Walk Through The Year* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1978), 402.

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*The Book of Gliders*. New York: E. P. Dutton, 1930.  
*Grassroot Jungles*. New York: Dodd, Mead, 1937.  
*The Boy's Book of Insects*. New York: E. P. Dutton, 1939.  
*The Boy's Book of Photography*. New York: E. P. Dutton, 1939.  
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*Dune Boy*. New York: Dodd, Mead, 1943.  
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*Days Without Time*. New York: Dodd, Mead, 1948.  
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## Notes on Contributors

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**Chris L. Nesmith** is a doctoral candidate at the University of South Carolina and is currently working on his dissertation on nineteenth-century American travel writing. He presented a paper on Thoreau and nineteenth-century textbooks at a session sponsored by the Thoreau Society at the 2000 MLA. He and Joel Myerson have co-edited a new edition of Jacob Abbott's *The Harper Establishment, or How the Story-Books are Made*, which will be published by Greenwood Press.

**Thomas A. Potter** is a Past President of the Indiana Audubon Society, a 1990 presenter at the Thoreau Society Annual Gathering, and a director of the Thoreau Society. He lives a Thoreauvian life style in a wood-heated cabin which he and his wife built themselves in thirty-two acres of hardwood forest. He is self-employed teaching photography in workshops throughout North America. He also leads Thoreau workshops in the Indianapolis area and lectures on Teale. He is currently under contract with Indiana University Press for the biography of Teale.

**Gary Scharnhorst** is Professor of English at the University of New Mexico, editor of *American Literary Realism*, and editor in alternating years of *American Literary Scholarship*. He is also the compiler of *Henry David Thoreau: An Annotated Bibliography of Comment and Criticism Before 1900* (1992).

**Leslie Perrin Wilson** has been Curator of Special Collections at the Concord Free Public Library since 1996. She writes on Concord-related literary and historical topics for a variety of publications, including the *Concord Journal*, which features her column "Historic Concord," and the ezine *Concord Magazine* (<http://www.concordma.com/magazine>). She is committed to dispelling the notion that Concord history has been fully explored, and to making local history as accessible as possible to a broad audience.

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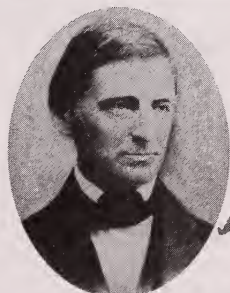
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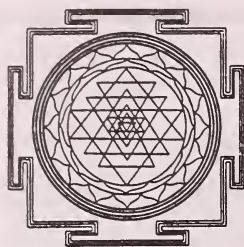
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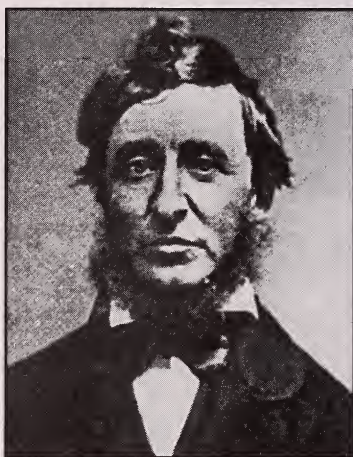
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